

S E R M O N S
A N D
D I S C O U R S E S
O N
P R A C T I C A L S U B J E C T S :

Never before Printed.

By *ROBERT MOSS*, D. D.
Late Dean of *Ely*, and Preacher to the Honourable SOCIETY of *Grays-Inn*.

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C O N T E N T S.

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SERMON I.

The Reason why Men love Dark-
ness rather than Light.



JOHN iii. 19.

*And this is the Condemnation, that
Light is come into the World, and
Men loved Darknes rather than
Light, because their Deeds were
Evil.*



IN these Words there are SERM.
three Things more espe- I.
cially, that offer themselves
unto our Consideration.

I. First, WHAT we are to understand
VOL. II. B by

The Reason why Men love

SER M. by that *Light*, which is here said to be
 I. *come into the World.*

II. *Secondly*, How it came to pass, that Men should reject this *Light*, and wilfully shut their Eyes against it. And

III. *Thirdly*, How just and inevitable the Condemnation of such Men is; *This* says he, that shall finally be their Judge; *This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil.*

OF each of these in their Order, as Time will permit. And

I. THE *First* Point to be settled is, what we are to understand by that *Light*, which is said to be *come into the World.*

AND this may be understood, both of the Person of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and of his Doctrine.

OF his Person, both as he is eternal, essential, uncreated *Light*, the *Brightness of his Fathers Glory*, very Light of very Light, but manifested to us in the *Flesh*, and also as he is the *Messiah*, that great Prophet,
 that



Darkness rather than Light.

3

that was to come into the World, and to be S E R M.
set up for a *Light to the Gentiles*, and to I.
all the Ends of the Earth: To whom all
the *Prophets* give Witness, and some of
them describe him particularly under this
very Character; as may be seen, *Isaiah* x.
17. xlii. 6. xlix. 6. *Micah* vii. 6. *Malachi*
iv. 2. and elsewhere.

AND therefore correspondent to this
Prophetic Character, our *Evangelist* styles
him *the Light*, and *the true Light*. And Chap. i. 5.
he takes the Style upon himself, *I am the* Chap. viii. 12.
Light of the World: He that followeth me,
shall not walk in Darkness, but shall have
the Light of Life. And again, *I am come* Chap. xii. 46.
a Light into the World, that whosoever be-
lieveth in me, should not continue in Dark-
ness.

BUT the *Light* that is here said to be
come into the World, may very consistently
be understood of the Doctrine of *Christ*, as
well as his Person; for 'tis his Heavenly
Doctrine, that is truly $\phi\omega\varsigma\ \epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \delta\omicron\pi\omicron\kappa\acute{\alpha}\lambda\upsilon\psi\omega$,
that bright Light of Revelation, that has
dispelled all thick Mists of Ignorance, Er-
ror, Vice, and Corruption; that has fully
made known the Righteousness of God

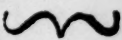
S E R M. unto Men, that has display'd and laid open
 I. the Mystery of divine Love in the Re-
 demption of Mankind, that has so com-
 fortably *shone upon them who sate in Dark-
 ness, and the Shadow of Death*; and so safely
 guided their Feet in the Way of Peace and
 Happiness. And 'tis accordingly called by
 2 Cor. iv. St. Paul, *The Light of the glorious Gospel*
 4. *of Christ*, as being immediately derived
 from *him*, who is according to that lofty
 Description of him in the Book of *Wis-*
 dom, *The Brightness of everlasting Light*,
 Chap. vii. *the unspotted Mirrour of the Power of God*,
 26. *and the Image of his Goodness.*

TAKING therefore the Doctrine of *Chri-*
stianity, as it was delivered to us, by its
 Divine Author, whilst he took up his *Ta-*
bernacle among us, for *that Light which is*
come into the World; I shall shew in the
 Sequel, that it well deserves the Character,
 and fully comes up to it.

AND this, If I should allow myself to
 stretch the Comparison as far as it will
 go, and seek for every little Resemblance
 that might be found, might be made out
 in Abundance of Particulars. I might in-
 sist, that the *Gospel like Light*, is the most
 glorious

Darkness rather than Light.

5

glorious Thing to behold, as representing SERM.
to us the Secrets and Wonders of God's I.
Nature, and Counsels, and Providence, and 
Grace: That the Purity of the *Gospel* like
that of *Light*, is perfectly spotless and un-
blemished: That the Propagation of the
Gospel, like that of *Light*, when first *the*
Day dawn'd from on high, was inconceiva-
bly swift, diffusing itself (as it were) at
once, over the Face of the whole habitable
World: That the Splendour of the *Gospel*
like that of *Light*, is always the same,
bright, and unextinguishable, though not
alike discernible to all, and in all Places,
by reason of Peoples wilfull, or judicial
Blindness, or some other unhappy Obsta-
cle, or Interposition from this Earth.

AND *Lastly*, To mention no more, that
the Mysteries of the *Gospel*, like those of
Light, though made manifest to the Saints,
are not so obvious to the Eye of the natu-
ral Man, are not to be resolved into the
common Principles of *Philosophy*; nay, they
are indeed in their own Nature inexplica-
ble, and incomprehensible.

You perceive by these Instances, that
the Parallel might be drawn to a good
B 3 Length.

SERM. Length. But I chuse at present to confine
 I. myself to two Particulars, which answer
 directly to two of the most eminent Properties of Light; *viz.* *First*, That it is that, which helps, even the Eye to see, and makes every Thing else visible. And *Secondly*, That it is of itself the most conspicuous of all Things.

AND in perfect Analogy to these two Properties of Light, I shall now apply myself to shew,

First, THAT the *Gospel Revelation* plainly discovers, and makes known to us, all the great, and important Truths of Religion: Both those, which natural Reason of itself was not able to descry, or else had lost the Sight of; and also those which were before but obscurely, and imperfectly revealed. And

Secondly, THAT the *Gospel Revelation* is proposed to us with the highest, and brightest Degree of Evidence. So that like *Light*, it helps even the Eye to see, and makes every Thing else visible; and at the same Time is of all other Things the most conspicuous.

THIS

Darkness rather than Light.

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THIS, it lies upon me to make out more SERM.
I.
distinctly.

AND *First*, That the *Gospel Revelation* plainly discovers to us, and makes known all the great, and important Truths of Religion; both those that natural Reason was unable to descry of itself, or else had lost the Sight of; and those which were before but obscurely, and imperfectly reveal'd.

AND these Discoveries, (or the most material of them) are reducible to these following Heads; *viz.* *First*, They are such as acquaint us with the Nature of God, and his Worship: Or, *Secondly*, With his wise, and wonderful Counsels concerning the Redemption of Mankind: Or *Thirdly*, With our own true State, and Condition: Or, *Fourthly*, With the Sum, and Substance, and Extent of our Duty, together with the best Motives to Practice: Or, *Lastly*, With the End, and Perfection of our Being. In all which Points, the World has been marvellously enlightned by the *Gospel of Christ*, in Comparison of that Darkness of Ignorance, in which the *Gentiles* were involved, and that Dimness of

B 4 Knowledge,

SERM. Knowledge, that was imparted to the
I. *Jews.* And

~~~~~ *First*, CONCERNING those Discoveries, which acquaint us with the Nature of God, and his Worship. In Relation to which, if we reflect upon that wretched Ignorance, and those wild Mistakes, that possessed both *Jew*, and *Gentile*, before the Dawning of the *Gospel*; we shall judge the better of the blessed Advantage that we enjoy, and put the juster Value upon it.

As for the *Heathen* Part of the World therefore, it is notorious, tho' upon natural Principles, they did make a Shift to reason themselves into a Belief of God's Existence, (for God never left himself without a Witness to that) yet they were most miserably at a Loss about his Nature, they had gross, and unworthy Conceptions of him, not suitable to his Majesty, and Excellency, not consistent with his essential Perfections.

LET *Tully* be the famous Instance, who after he had put as good Words, and Reason into the Mouth of *Balbus* the *Stoic*, as a *Heathen* well could speak, to prove a Deity;

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Deity; introduces him again, attempting to explain the Nature of the Being he had been asserting; but in this he falters shamefully, not being able to raise his Thoughts higher than an \* *Anima Mundi*, a Sort of subtle material Principle, pervading, and actuating the Universe: A Notion so idle and precarious, that it served only to weaken his former Proof, and render the Thing he had contended for, more questionable.

No less injurious were they generally speaking, to the Unity of the Godhead. For how ridiculous is the Genealogy of the Gods, as it is deduced by † *Hesiod*, and how prodigious the Number. Nay, *Varro* the learned *Roman*, as ‡ *Tertullian* remarks, reckons up no less than three hundred several *Jupiters*. Though St. § *Austin* tells us, that he himself was inclinable to think there was but one.

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\* Lib. 2. de Naturâ Deorum, p. 204. Edit. *Hen. Stephan. Paris* 1538.

† Vide *Θεολογία*. *Hesiod.*

‡ *Tertulliani ad Nationes*, Lib. 1. p. 48. Edit. *Rigaltii*.  
§ *Augustini de Consensu Evangelistarum*, Lib. 1. To. IV. Op. Edit. per *Theologos*, *Louvanienses*, p. 147. & alibi.

However,



SER M. However, both the Learned and Vulgar  
 I. agreed in worshipping as many, as Super-  
 stition could feign a Being, or find a Name  
 for. The Ghosts of dead Men, infamous  
 while they lived, for all Manner of Wick-  
 edness, and Villany; Beasts and creeping  
 Things, Trees and Rivers; nay, mere *Non-*  
*Entities*, under the fictitious Names of  
 Fortune: And even Vice itself, under the  
 venerable Title of Impudence.

AND such as were their Gods, such also  
 were the Rites of their Religious Worship,  
 irrational, brutish, vitious, detestable and  
 barbarous. Witness the beastly Mysteries  
 of *Bacchus*, and *Venus*; and that most in-  
 humane Practice of offering Men, Wo-  
 men and Children, a bloody Victim to their  
 cruel Deities.

AND it is apparent enough from these  
 Instances, (and many more that might be  
 produced) how deplorably ignorant the  
*Heathens* generally were, of the Nature of  
 the one true God, and that Divine Wor-  
 ship, which properly belongs to him.

As for the *Jews* in the next Place, it  
 must be own'd, that they were not alto-  
 gether Strangers to these Matters. For  
 they

*Darkness rather than Light.*

II

they were Witnesses to many of God's wonderful Works, they were the Care of his peculiar Providence: Nay, they were in Covenant with him, and under immediate Subjection to him, governed by Laws of Divine Institution, which (besides other Things suited to the Genius, and State of that People) contain'd very express, and punctual Directions concerning the Worship of the supreme God, and all Things thereunto pertaining.

S E R M.  
I.  
~

AND yet notwithstanding, they took up with very lame imperfect Notions of that God, who had so often *made bare his Arm*, in their Defence, and so many various Ways manifested himself to them. For they in Derogation to God's infinite Justice, and Mercy, and in Confidence of their own undeserved Privileges, vainly thought that he was *the God of the Jews only, and not of the Gentiles also*: And upon this Account they magnify'd themselves without Measure, and hated, and despised all others.

AND yet, for all the boasted Peculiarity of the Relation, that they did bear to  
God,

SERM. God, they most shamefully revolted from  
 I. him, and in high Dishonour to his sacred  
 Name, set up the Gods of the *Heathens*,  
 out of whose Hands they had been  
 miraculously deliver'd, as his Rivals in that  
 Divine Worship, that was incommunicably  
 due to him alone.

ONE would have thought indeed, that  
 God's revealed Will had been express e-  
 nough to the contrary: But yet they were  
 so vain in their Imaginations, that they ei-  
 ther did not see it, or else wilfully over-  
 look'd it.

AND when God in great Condescension  
 to their Infirmities, instituted the ritual  
 Part of his Worship, on purpose to reclaim  
 them from Idolatry, to keep them so con-  
 stantly, and fully employ'd in his own Ser-  
 vice, that they might not go a *Whoring af-  
 ter strange God*: They still mistook the  
 gracious Intent of his Providence, and neg-  
 lected their own Duty, even when they  
 seem'd to themselves to be most exact in  
 performing it. For they dwelt upon the  
 mere Surface, the naked Letter of the Law,  
 without searching into the inward, and  
 spiritual Meaning: They observed the ce-  
 remonial

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remonial Part with a great deal of Scrupulosity; not so much as considering, never once labouring after that Purity of Heart, and Sanctity, and Perfection; which these outward Symbols did mystically represent, and primarily intend.

S E R M.  
I.  


So far were the *Jews* themselves from being clear, or fix'd in the true Notion of the God *Jehovah*, in whom they presumed to claim (as it were) the sole Propriety: So far were they from worshipping him regularly, according to his own Institution, or answering the true End of it, tho' they had his written Law for their Guide, and Instructor.

BUT see the happy Difference, the great Preeminence of the *Gospel Revelation* in this Respect, whereby all our Notions of God, are clear'd up, and settled, and guarded against all Mistakes, (but such as are wilful) both in Speculation, and Practice.

FOR the *Gospel* represents God to us as he is, a Spirit perfectly simple, pure, and immaculate; in Essence indivisibly one, and yet in Subsistence inconceivably three; *For there are three that bear Record in*  
2  
*Heaven,*



SERM. *Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the*

I. *Holy Ghost: And these three are one.* It represents him as as a Being, absolute in all Perfection, of infinite Truth, Goodness, Wisdom, Power, Justice, Mercy, &c. It represents him as the great Creator and Preserver, the wise Governor, and Sovereign Judge of the whole World, and the compassionate Saviour, and Redeemer of Mankind: In a Word, it represents him all lovely, and venerable, and worthy to receive all possible Honour, and Glory, and Blessing, and Adoration.

Jo. iv.  
24.

AND suitable to this Representation of the Divine Nature, is the Worship that the *Gospel* prescribes. For our *Evangelist* tells us, that *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit, and in Truth*; that is, in the Integrity of the Heart and Affections, and not in mere outward Formalities; in which the mistaken *Jews* laid the whole Stress of their Religion.

BUT we *Christians* are better instructed; we have learnt that the Imitation of the Deity, in all his communicable Perfections, is the greatest Honour that we can do unto him,

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him; and therefore we are exhorted to be *Followers of God as dear Children*, to be *pure as he is pure, and holy as he is holy, and perfect as he is perfect.* And that nothing might be wanting to make our Religious Services well accepted in his Sight; we are directed to offer up all our Prayers and Praises, in the meritorious Name, and thro' the powerful Mediation of his only begotten Son, one in Nature, and equal in Glory with himself, in whom, and at whose Intercession, he is, and always will be entirely well pleased. And this is one noble Discovery, that we owe to the *Gospel Revelation*; after which natural Reason could but grope as it were in the Dark, and which in the Twilight afforded to the *Jews*, was far from being clearly, and perfectly discerned.

*Secondly*, We are indebted to the *Gospel* for another very considerable Discovery, that acquaints us with God's wise and wonderful Counsels, concerning the Redemption of Mankind.

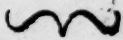
AND here again the Eye of natural Reason was altogether benighted: It might perhaps with strict, and wistful Attention have

SERMON. have just Light enough to have some Marks  
 I. of its own Ruine, some Tokens of that  
 Degeneracy and Corruption, into which  
 humane Nature is sunk: It could not indeed but be sensible in some Measure, of the sad Load of Guilt, that the Soul of sinful Man labours under; and the black Cloud of Despair, with which it is overcast.

BUT what Comfort is it alas! to see and feel one's Misery, and yet not know how to get rid on't. And what Method could Nature dictate to atone its own Guilt? From what Principles could Reason collect any Assurance of Pardon, at the Hands of an injured, and incensed God? Nature indeed might plead its own Frailty, *i. e.* in other Words impeach God himself, for making Man a free Agent: And Reason might alledge, that God is infinitely merciful: But then Reason must allow, that God is equally just, and holy; and that these his Attributes are at perfect Unity with themselves, and act in perpetual Harmony together. And here Reason must needs be at a Stand; or if it can conclude any farther, it must conclude no less, than that a God equally holy, and just, and merciful,

*Darkness rather than Light.*

17

ciful, cannot be supposed to extend his S E R M.  
Mercy to the Sinner, without some pre- I.  
vious Satisfaction, and Reparation to the   
Honour of his Justice, and his Holiness:  
But what this Satisfaction should be, en-  
tirely depends upon the Will of God,  
which no Penetration of Reason can ever  
found, any farther than he himself is  
pleased to reveal it. And it will appear  
in the Process of the Argument, that we  
*Christians* can fairly appeal to very antient  
Promises, Predictions, and Prefigurations,  
directly pointing at this very Thing.

AND were not the *Jews*, it may very pro-  
perly be ask'd, interested in all these? Yes,  
doubtless they were: For to them they  
were first deliver'd, and by them transmit-  
ted to us, and therefore, 'tis hardly credi-  
ble, that they themselves should remain in  
Ignorance of a Truth, that so nearly con-  
cerned them.

NOR did they remain in perfect Igno-  
rance; they had a distant, and indistinct  
Prospect of the *Messiah* that was to come,  
and a constant Expectation of his Coming;  
and trusted in him as the *Redeemer* of *Is-  
rael*.

VOL. II.

C

BUT



SERM.

I.

BUT then it is to be observ'd withal, that the *Jewish* Dispensation, as such, could not afford Ease, or Peace to guilty Consciences, or support them with the Assurance of God's Pardon. Propitiatory Sacrifices were appointed indeed, but not in all Cases, nay not for the most heinous and presumptuous Offences, which most stood in need of Atonement. And even where they did take Place, the mere *Blood of Bulls, and of Goats* could not purge the inner Man, nor wash out the moral Stain of Sin; it could only satisfy for the Temporal Penalty. 'Tis true, the legal Sacrifices had a farther View, and a higher Aim, which was to typify the Sufferings, and the Death of the *Messiah*: But then this is what the Law did not explain to them; and 'tis the Nature of a *Type* to be somewhat obscure, 'till the Presence of the *Antitype* makes the Resemblance more discernible. And hence it came to pass, that the *Jews* misled by an Error, that was fatal to them, stuck close to the Letter of the Law, without enquiring into the mystical Meaning; and whilst they amused themselves with the Shadow, let go the Substance.

*Darkness rather than Light.*

19

IT is also true, that the *Prophets* frequently described the *Messiah*, and characteriz'd him as a *Saviour*, and a *Deliverer*; and amongst the rest *Isaiah* most expressly. *And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from Transgression in Jacob.* But the *Jews* being a gross, and carnal People, and chiefly affected with Things Temporal, had lost all Sense of their Spiritual Bondage, and therefore they foolishly misinterpreted all such like *Prophecies*, of a final Deliverance from all Captivity, and Persecution, and a glorious Reestablishment of their Kingdom, and Polity, under the Reign of the *Messiah*. So little at last did they understand (with all these Helps) of the Mystery, or Means of Man's Redemption.

BUT blessed be God, this Mystery which was kept secret since the World began, is now made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the *Prophets*, according to the Commandment of the everlasting God, made known unto all Nations, for the Obedience of Faith. The *Gospel* gives a full, and clear Account of all the Steps of this stupendous Transaction: We are comforta-

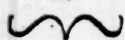
SERM.

I.

Chap. lix.  
20.

S E R M. bly assured in the Words a little before the

I.



Text; *That God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* And from the same

1 Ep. ii.

1, 2.

Hand we are inform'd, that *if any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins, even the Sins of the whole World:* And that we might be satisfied, that this Propitiation is available with God, to obtain our Pardon; it is again declared, *That if we confess our Sins, God is faithful, and just to forgive our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.*

1 John i.

9.

WE may depend upon it, for God has graciously entitled us to it, by Virtue of the federal Promise, that he made to our Mediator, and Advocate; and *he is faithful, who has promised.*

THIS therefore is the explicate Doctrine of the Gospel, and 'tis a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that *Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners.*

So that the Method of our Salvation is cleared up to us, beyond a Doubt of the Possibility.

FOR

*Darkness rather than Light.*

21

FOR we cannot doubt of the Sufficiency S E R M.  
of the Ransome paid, nor of the Efficacy I.  
of the Atonement made, since it is no o-  
ther than the *precious Blood of Christ, the*  
*Blood of the everlasting Covenant*, as 'tis  
called (in the 13<sup>th</sup> to the *Hebrews*, & 20.)  
nay, *the Blood of God* himself, as the Scri- Acts xx.  
pture warrants us to speak. 28.

NOR can we doubt, but that *Jesus* is  
the Person designed by God to accomplish  
this mighty Work: For he is the direct  
*Counterpart* of all those antient *Types*, and  
*Figures*, and *Adumbrations* of the *Messiah*,  
that were contain'd in any of the legal  
*Ceremonies*, or exhibited in the *Lives*, and  
*Actions* of Men, famous in their *Genera-*  
*tions*; (such as *Isaac*, *Aaron*, *Moses*, *Jo-*  
*shua*, *David*, and several others) and that  
will be famous in all that shall succeed,  
wheresoever this Gospel shall be preach'd.  
And he also is the exact Complement of all  
those celebrated Predictions, which the  
*Jews*, whilst they were yet unfulfilled, under-  
stood of the *Messiah*, which have since been  
verified to a Tittle in him; and never were,  
in any other besides him.



SERM.

I.

the extraordinary Manner of his Conception, the Time, and Place of his Birth; the Usage, and Reception that he met with in the World, his personal Endowments, and his public Character, his Death, and Resurrection; are the very same in plain, and unquestionable *History*, that had been represented of old in *Prophetical* Description. So that it must of Necessity be granted, that this is he of whom *Moses* in the *Law*, and the *Prophets* did write. Oh blessed therefore are the Eyes which see the Things that we see; (for even the *Prophets* that wrote of them did not see them with the Clearness, that we do in the Meridian Light of the *Gospel*.) Blessed are the Ears that hear the Things which we hear; but blessed above all, are the Hearts that receive, and retain them, and bring forth Fruit with Patience.

Luke: viii.  
15.

Thirdly, ANOTHER happy Discovery, that is owing to the *Gospel Revelation*; is that which acquaints us, with the whole Sum, and Substance, and Extent of our Duty, and enforces it by the best Motives to Practice.

FOR

*Darkness rather than Light.*

23

FOR here also, the Information given <sup>SERM.</sup> in from unenlightened Reason, was miserably defective; for there is no such Thing as a Perfect I will not say, but even as a tolerable System of Morality to be met with amongst the *Heathens*; none without some remarkable Flaw, or Blemish.

LOOK into the Prescripts of the sagest *Lawgivers*, and the Writings of the gravest *Philosophers*, and you will still find something, or other allow'd and practis'd, that is impious, and unwarrantable. \* *Lycurgus* for Instance, in his Laws countenances, and encourages Theft, and Community of Wives, and exposing of new born Infants, that were not lively, and lusty; and yet *Plutarch* his *Biographer* heaps his Commendations upon him, without any Censure or Abatement. † *Plato* pleads likewise for the Lawfulness, and Conveniency of having their Wives in Common. And *Socrates*, and *Cato*, avow'd the same in Practice. Fornication was look'd upon as a

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\* Plutarch. Lycurg. Edit. Paris. Vol. I. p. 49, &c.

† Plato de Republic. Lib. 5. To. II. Op. Edit. Serrani, p. 457. 461. 466. To. III. Op. p. 18.

S E R M. venial Thing, and upon some Occasions  
 I. patronized, and defended. Self-Murder  
 was generally esteemed lawful, and in the  
 Case of *Cato Uticensis*, unreasonably ap-  
 plauded by most of the *Roman* Writers.  
 Revenge was judged to be honourable,  
 and Forgiving, the Mark of a puny Spi-  
 rit.

THESE, and such like were the Morals  
 taught by the *Heathens*, and it was as high  
 as they were able to climb, by the Help of  
 such weak Motives, and Inducements to  
 be virtuous, as they commonly proposed to  
 themselves. For they had little else in  
 View, to spur them on to the Practice of  
 Virtue, besides the Desire, and Expecta-  
 tion of a little empty Fame, and a survi-  
 ving Memory.

THE Immortality of the Soul, and a fu-  
 ture State of Rewards, and Punishments,  
 they were but very faintly, (if at all) per-  
 suaded of. Some of their *Philosophers* in-  
 deed, took it up upon blind Tradition, and  
 others were willing to send their uncertain  
 Gueffes, and their Wishes after it: But they  
 all wanted Arguments to support a ra-  
 tional, and well grounded Assent to it.  
 And

*Darkness rather than Light.*

25

And it is particularly observable, that SERM.  
\* *Tully* himself, when he is arguing stren- I.  
uously for it, and seems to be mighti-  
ly flush'd with the Hopes of it, frequently  
drops the Thing in Quest; and contented-  
ly exchanges it for the airy Phantome of  
immortal Glory, which of all Things he  
courted, and coveted.

BUT tho' the *Heathens* were thus slenderly provided, both as to the Precepts of Virtue, and the Motives to it; yet we shall find the *Jews* sure better furnished. And so undoubtedly they were, under the Direction of a *Law* instituted by God himself; and that Law, *St. Paul* tells us, was *holy, and just, and good*. It must needs be Rom. vii.  
so, the moral Part of it; for it is not to be 12.  
conceiv'd, that the Righteous God should command, or countenance any Thing that is simply Evil. But yet in the *Judicial* Part of it, some Things are permitted (as *Divorce* in Particular) not perfectly the best: But this was for the *Hardness* of *their* Mat. xix.  
*Hearts*, as our *Saviour* tells them: And 8.

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\* *Tusculan. Quæst. l. i.*



SERMON. the Design of the Law after all, was to  
 I. prevent the Inconvenience, and Mischief  
 that might arise, from such a Liberty altogether unrestrain'd; nay indeed, it was rather to prevent the Thing itself, by qualifying it with certain restrictive Conditions, than to indulge, or encourage it.

BUT though the moral Part of the Law must be allow'd to be intrinsically good, and in its Kind also perfect; yet it labour'd ('tis plain) under an accidental Imperfection, that rendred it in a great Measure ineffectual. For at the same Time, that the ritual Institutions, and mere carnal Ordinances are nicely described, and most strictly enjoin'd, some of them under the severest Penalties; moral Duties, 'tis to be observed, are more sparingly delivered, and not so clearly explained, nor so strongly inculcated. And this gave Occasion to an ignorant People, who had measured their Obedience by their Adherence to the mere Letter, to insist chiefly upon their ceremonial Observances, and to neglect the *weightier Matters, Judgment, Mercy, and the Love of God*; nay, to neglect almost every Duty,  
 that

that was literally, and very plainly expressed; and moreover liable to the Cognizance of the Judges, and threatened with some Temporal Penalty. Hence came those false, and forced Expositions of the Law, contrary to its true Meaning, which our *Saviour* in the 5<sup>th</sup> of *St. Matthew*, and elsewhere, takes so much Pains to rectify.

ANOTHER Defect, with which the *Mosaic* Law was attended, was the want of a sufficient Force, to excite them to Obedience; and to give Life to their Practice. For they had no direct, and explicit Promise, either of the Assistance of God's Spirit, or the full, and free Pardon of their Sins: And this must needs be a vast Discouragement, even to their honest Endeavours; labouring as they did, under the Sense of their own natural Impotence, and the great Guilt that they had contracted. Besides, which is the Principal Thing of all, they had no clear, and certain Prospect of a future State of Retribution; for it was not in so many Words expressly propounded to them in their Law, and they dreamt of no Happiness, but what was literal also.

THEY

SERM.  
I.  
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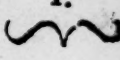
SERM.

I.

THEY might indeed have easily collected so much from antient Tradition, or even from rational Arguments, drawn from the very Tenour of those Promises, which they understood of Things temporal; some of which were not, could not be fulfilled, even to those that were best entitled to them, in this Life: From whence the Conclusion was obvious, and necessary; that if God be true, and just; there must be another Life after this, *immortal in the Heavens*. But the Eyes of this *besotted*, earthly-minded People, were waxen so fat, that nothing but the most explicate Declaration could serve their Turn, and that they want.

AND under these, and the like Disadvantages did both *Jew*, and *Gentile* lay, with Respect both to the Knowledge of their Duty, and the most powerful Incitements to the Practice of it.

BUT Thanks be to God, it is far otherwise under the *Gospel* Dispensation. The *Christian* Religion plainly teacheth, and effectually enforceth an universal Righteousness, both towards God, and towards Man. The Rule we have given us to walk by, is in  
both

both Perfection, and Efficacy, far beyond SERM.  
all the Rules that were ever known to the I.  
World before. For *whatsoever Things are*   
*true, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever*  
*Things are honest, whatsoever Things are*  
*lovely, or of good Report, if there be any*  
*Virtue, if there be any Praise; these, and*  
*these only are the Things that the Gospel*  
directs us to think upon, and do.

AND to make our Duty the more easy,  
and delightful to us, it resolves it all into  
a Principle of Love and Charity; and to  
provoke and inflame that Love the more,  
we are frequently put in Mind, that 'tis  
but a grateful, though very unequal Return  
to the marvellous, and matchless Love of  
God in *Christ Jesus*.

AND lest our natural Inability, or Averse-  
ness to do that which is good, should ei-  
ther quench our Love, or damp our Alacri-  
ty, and tempt us either to flinch from our Du-  
ty, or sink under it; our good Desires are  
quickned, and our honest Endeavours sup-  
ported, by a gracious Promise of the Holy  
Spirit, to enlighten our Understandings,  
and sanctify our Wills, and guide, and in-  
fluence all our Actions; and enable us to  
perform



SERM. perform an acceptable Obedience. And

I. that nothing might be wanting to keep us steddy, and encourage us to Perseverance; the *Gospel* applies itself in the most sensible and affecting Manner, to our Hopes and Fears, by the Proposal of Rewards, and Punishments in an other World; each of them in Degree inconceivably great, and everlasting in Duration. To sum up all in Saint Paul's Words: *The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation hath appear'd unto all Men. Teaching us, that denying Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godlily in this present World. Looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar People, Zealous of good Works.*

Tit. ii.  
11, &c.

UPON the whole Matter, it is most undeniably clear, that the World is indebted to the glorious Light of the *Gospel of Christ*, for all the most important Discoveries in Religion, whether of the Nature and Worship of the one true God, or his wise and wonderful Counsels for the Redemption of Mankind

*Darkness rather than Light.*

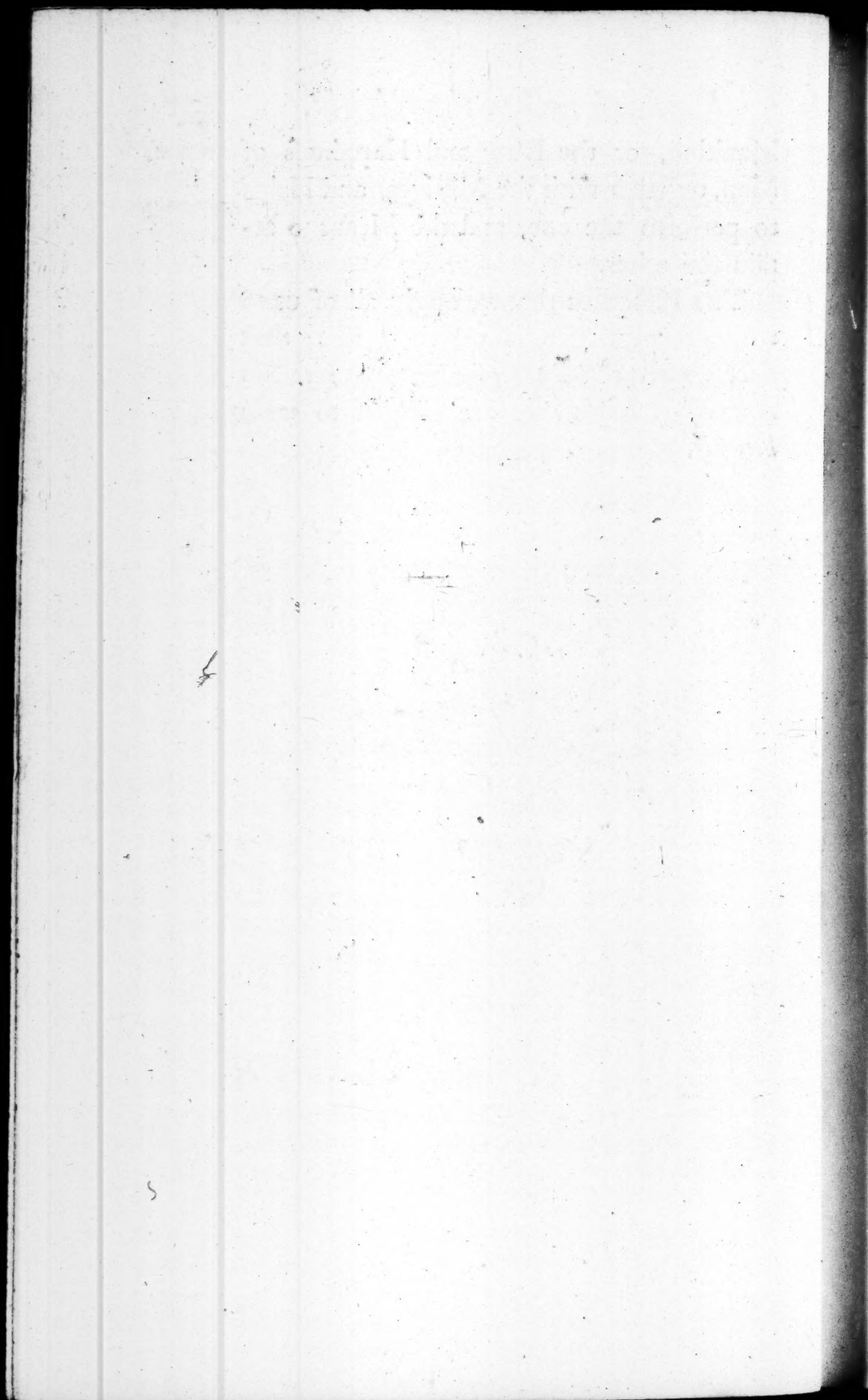
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Mankind, or the Duty and Happiness of S E R M.  
Man, together with the Motives, and Helps I.  
to perform the one, and the Means to attain the other.

THE Inference that we ought all of us to make from hence, is certainly this; that *since we are called out of Darkness, into this marvellous Light, we are obliged to walk honestly.*



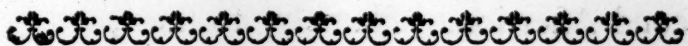
SERMON





## S E R M O N II.

The Reason why Men love Dark-  
ness rather than Light.

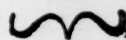


JOHN iii. 19.

*And this is the Condemnation, that  
Light is come into the World, and  
Men loved Darknes rather than  
Light, because their Deeds were  
Evil.*



N Speaking to these Words, S E R M.  
I proposed, II.



I. *First*, To shew, what  
we are to understand by  
that *Light*, which is here said to be *come*  
V O L. II. D into



SER M. *into the World.* And under this Head I have

II.

endeavour'd to prove,

*First*, THAT the *Gospel Revelation* plainly discovers, and makes known to us, all the great, and important Truths of Religion; both those which natural Reason of itself was not able to descry, or else had lost the Sight of; and also those which before were but obscurely, and imperfectly reveal'd.

I PROCEED now to the Proof of my second Assertion. Namely, to shew,

II. *Secondly*, THAT the *Gospel Revelation* is proposed to our Belief, with the clearest, and brightest Degree of Evidence, answerable to that other Property of *Light*; that as it makes other Things visible, so it is itself the most conspicuous of all Things.

BUT when I speak of the clearest, and brightest Degree of Evidence; I must not be understood absolutely, but only of the very best, that the Subject Matter would bear, all that was reasonable, or needful, or possible in such a Case: And that is full as much sure, as any Man can reasonably, or modestly, or even honestly desire.

And

And all this Evidence I will be bold to say, S E R M. II.  
the *Gospel Revelation* most undoubtedly  
has; as it is contain'd in, and convey'd to  
us by that faithful, and impartial Account  
of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of  
our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and all his famous  
Deeds, and heavenly Doctrines recorded  
by the *Evangelists*.

AND this Evidence will open itself (as it  
were) to your View, with all the Advan-  
tage of Strength, and Clearness: If you  
please to weigh and examine,

*First*, THE moral Certainty of the *Hi-  
story* itself, considered as such.

*Secondly*, THE concurrent Testimony of  
other *Histories*.

*Thirdly*, THE remarkable Correspon-  
dence it has with the *Old Testament*, in the  
Completion of some very remarkable Pre-  
dictions.

*Fourthly*, THE extraordinary, and infal-  
lible Attestation given to the Truth of it,  
by God himself. And

*First*, IF we examine into the moral  
Certainty of the *History* itself, considered, as  
such; it will appear to be as indubitably  
great, as 'tis possible for any Thing to be,

SERM. that depends upon Relation, or Testimony;

II. as all *History* does. Nay, I will add, that the *Gospel History* (even humanly Speaking, and before we come ultimately to resolve our Faith into the Testimony of God himself) carries more, and more infallible Marks of Certainty along with it, than any other *History* extant.

For the Credit of all *History* considered as such, rests principally upon the Qualifications of the *Historian*. And the necessary Qualifications of a just *Historian*, and one whose Testimony may safely be relied on, are,

*First*, THE Ability, and Opportunity of coming to the Knowledge of the Truth. And,

*Secondly*, AN unbiaſſed Integrity in reporting the Truth, ſimply, and nakedly as they find it.

IF therefore I can ſhew,

*First*, THAT the *Evangelists* were ſufficiently furniſhed with the Ability, and Opportunity of knowing the Truth of what they related. And

*Secondly*, THAT their Integrity in relating what they knew, is not only clear of  
all

all Suspicion; but also supported, and vindicated by stronger, and more convincing Arguments, than can be alledged in Favour of any other *Historian*.

S E R M.  
II.  
~~~~~

I SAY, If I can make out these two Points, I shall set the Credit of the *Gospel* (as it deserves) far above the Level of other *Histories*. And then, if I can prove,

Thirdly, THAT the Nature, and Circumstances of the Facts related by the *Evangelists*, are such, as render all Imposture, Fiction, or Delusion plainly impracticable, and the very Supposition of any such Practice perfectly absurd; this will advance the *Historical Truth* of the *Gospel*, to the very highest Degree of Evidence; it will amount almost to a Proof, that 'tis impossible to be false; which yet is more than can in Reason be required, more than is ever insisted upon, as a Motive to assent to any other Historical Truth whatsoever. To proceed then,

First, I AM to shew, that the *Evangelists* were sufficiently furnished with Abilities, and Opportunities of knowing the Truth of all that they related.

SERM.

II.

How they were particularly enabled for this Work, is not the present Question: But that they wanted no Abilities; their very Writings may be allow'd to witness for them. For they write like Men of Understanding, gravely, and consistently; they give us a plain unaffected Account of the miraculous Conception, and Birth of our *Lord Jesus*; of the Manner of his first Reception in the World, of the early Hazards he was expos'd to, the malicious Opposition he afterwards met with, especially when he began to make his publick Appearance, and to declare the End of his Coming, and the Approach of his Kingdom. They relate in short, all the most remarkable Incidents of his Life, and the particular Manner of his Death, together with his Resurrection after three Days, and his Ascent into Heaven after forty, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost at the Day of *Pentecost*, imparting the Gift of Tongues to his *Apostles*, and thereby empowering them to propagate his Doctrine as they did, with incredible Expedition, and Success in all the Nations, and Languages upon Earth.

THINGS

THINGS very strange, and surprizing it S E R M.
must be confess'd these are; but they are II.
told with an Air of Seriousness, and Sobriety, and Frankness, and Openness, as if the Men knew well enough what they said, and knew the whole Matter of Fact to be certainly, and incontestably true.

AND no Doubt they had Opportunities enough, (and made Use of them) to inform themselves with all Exactness. For they were Inhabitants of the Countrey, that was the Scene of all these Wonders, and lived at the Time when they happened: And none of these Things were done in a Corner, they were all public, and notorious, and known to every Body, that had but the common Curiosity to observe, what was rare, and unusual.

BUT sure the *Evangelists* themselves must be well informed of all Particulars: For two of them, *St. Matthew*, and *St. John*, were of the Number of the earliest Followers, and more immediate Retainers of the Person, whose Actions they record: And therefore they must have frequent Opportunities to behold his Miracles with their Eyes, and to hear the Oracles of his

SER M. Mouth, and to receive direct Satisfaction
 II. from most of their Senses. And St. *John*
 accordingly fortifies his Testimony with

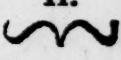
1 John i. 1. this very Assurance; *That which we have heard (saith he) which we have seen with our Eyes, which we have looked upon, which our Hands have handled of the Word of Life, that declare we unto you.*

AND though St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke* were not of the Number of the twelve, nor perhaps of the seventy Disciples; yet 'tis allow'd on all Hands, that they were early Converts to the *Christian* Faith, and fellow Labourers too; the one with St. *Peter*, and the other with St. *Paul*. And therefore 'tis more than probable, that they themselves had a considerable Part in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, or least wise, that they were both Eye, and Ear Witnesses to many wonderful Passages therein recorded. And for other Matters, without all Peradventure, their intimate Conversation with those that had been Eye-Witnesses from the beginning, must afford them the Advantage of a very full, and particular Information: And this St. *Luke* professes in the Preface to his *Gospel*. *It seem'd good*

Darkness rather than Light.

41

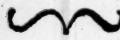
to me also, having had perfect Understand-
ing of all Things from the very first, to
write unto thee in order, most excellent The-
ophilus. That thou mightest know the Cer-
tainty of those Things wherein thou hast been
instructed.

S E R M.
II.


WE have all imaginable Reason there-
fore to believe, and none at all to doubt,
that the *Evangelists* were furnished with
sufficient Abilities, and Opportunities to
know the Truth of what they undertook
to relate, as being the immediate Disciples,
and Followers of *Jesus*, Eye-Witnesses to
his Miracles, Ear-Witnesses to his Do-
ctrine: Or else punctually informed of
both, by those that were so. And (which
is farther observable) all of them unani-
mously agreeing in the same plain, unarti-
ficial Account of Things, without any ma-
terial Difference, or Variation; without a-
ny to be sure, but what is rather an Ar-
gument of their honest, artless Care, and
Knowledge, than any Detection of their
Ignorance, or Inconsistency of their Wri-
tings: So far therefore, they must in all
Justice pass for *Historians*, as well quali-
fied as need to be.

Secondly,

SERM.

II.  Secondly, THE next Point to be considered, is their Integrity in relating what they are supposed to know to be true, simply, and nakedly as they found it. And here again, they are clear from all Colour of Suspicion; nay, they have done more indeed to convince the World of their unbiaſſed Sincerity, and religious Adherence to the Truth, than ever any *Historian* beſides; ſo that there is not ſo much as Room left to faſten the contrary Suspicion upon them.

ENQUIRE into their whole Character, and Deportment, and you'll find it perfectly clear, without the leaſt Flaw, or Blemiſh, from one End to the other.

TAKE them at their Beginning, and they appear to have been plain, uneducated Men, not poliſh'd by the Acquiſition of the Arts, and Sciences, not practiſed in any Sleight, or Cunning, beyond that of catching a few ſilly Fiſh; and therefore of all others the unfiſteſt, and unlikeliſt Men to ſet up for Forgers of *History*, and to tack Tales together of their own Invention, ſo ſubtly concerted, as to impoſe upon the moſt inquiſitive, and diſcerning in
the

the Age that then was, as well as in all S E R M.
that have succeeded. II.

AND if their Subtlety had been greater than it was, their Probity was still too great to be concern'd in such Practices; they had other, and better Instructions from that Master, in *whose Mouth no Guile was found*. And his Doctrine they expressly taught, and his Example they proposed to follow: And the Foot-steps of the one were as discernible in their Lives, as those of the other are still in their Writings: Nor could their most malicious Enemies ever charge them with any Kind of Prevarication, or sinister Action, contrary to that godly Sincerity that they professed.

IT were highly injurious therefore, as well as unreasonable once to imagine, that they should designedly falsify, in the *History* of Things, that they pretended to know upon the most certain Grounds, and to relate with the strictest Truth: Nay, that they should ground their very Religion upon a Lye, and take a great deal of Pains to cheat others, into the Belief of what they knew to be an utter Falsehood of their own Devising.

PEOPLE

SERM.

II.

wicked as this comes to; and strangely unaccountable it would have been indeed in them, who had no Manner of Temptation to draw them into so plain a Snare. They could propose no temporal Advantage to themselves, nor Profit: For from the Time they first gave up their Names to *Christ*; they quitted all, and follow'd him; and without any farther Care for themselves, dedicating their whole Lives to his Service, without so much as the Expectation of any present Reward. Not Honour: For the Name of *Christ* crucified, was Matter of Scandal to the *Jew*, and Derision to the *Gentile*; and the Professors of *Christianity* were held in the utmost Derision, Contempt, and Hatred by Both. Not Pleasure lastly, unless it could be reckon'd a pleasant Thing to be perpetually exposed to the Malice, and Rage of their cruel Enemies, and to suffer a thousand Torments, and Deaths. 'Tis true, the *Apostles*, and first Planters of the *Gospel*, did find a Pleasure, even in Suffering; they rejoiced, that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for the Name of *Christ*. And though they were well

Acts v. 41.

well aware, that Bonds, and Afflictions did SERM.
still abide them, wheresoever they went; II.
yet none of these Things moved them, neither
did they account their Lives dear unto them-
selves, so that they might finish their Course
with Joy, and the Ministry which they had
receiv'd of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Go-
spel of the Grace of God; and accordingly
all, or most of the Evangelists, and Apo-
stles, and the immediate Disciples of our
Lord, did finish the Course of their Mi-
nistry, by joyfully sealing the Truth of
what they testified, with their dearest
Blood: But then this is the noblest Confir-
mation, that they could possibly give to
the Truth of their Testimony; the very
highest, and strongest indeed, that any Te-
stimony, humanely speaking, can be ca-
pable of: It is in short, a Vindication of
their Integrity, beyond the Possibility of a
Contradiction.

FOR nothing less than the firmest Per-
suasion, and fullest Conviction of the Truth,
and the heartiest Concern for it, could in-
spire Men with Constancy, and Courage;
to expend their Lives in its Defence. It is
not to be supposed, it cannot be conceiv'd,
that

SERM. that Men should be so false to their own
 II. Interests, as to conspire to impose a Lye
 upon the Belief of the World, at the Expence of their own Blood; and that they should continue all to a Man, inflexibly firm to so wicked, and so wretched a Cause; and not one of them have Honesty, or good Sense enough, to disabuse himself, and others, by the timely Discovery of such an unreasonable, and unnatural Confederacy.

'Tis so monstrously incredible this, that the very Mention of it establishes the Credit of the *Gospel History*, and gives it a manifest Advantage, in Point of Certainty, above all other *Histories*; because the Authors witnessed the Truth of it with their own Blood; and are therefore the most unsuspected Witnesses, and dignify'd with the Title of Martyrs on that Account. And as it cannot enter into a Man's Thoughts, that any one should be content to sacrifice his very Life for the Sake of a known Lye; so there is no other *Historian* that we know of, besides the *Evangelists*, that has run the like Hazards, or exposed himself to certain Death, to gain Credit to the Truth.

This

This is a Mark of Distinction reserved to SERM.
the *Gospel History* alone; whose Truth will II.
appear to be indubitably clear, and to stand
upon the solideſt Grounds of moral Cer-
tainty. If

Thirdly, IT be conſider'd, that the Na-
ture, and Circumſtances of the Facts rela-
lated by the *Evangelists*, are ſuch as render
all Impoſture, Fiction, or Deluſion plain-
ly impracticable, and the very Suppoſition
of any ſuch Practice perfectly abſurd.

FOR the Facts related by the ſacred *Hi-
ſtorians* are moſt of them public, and no-
torious, obvious to be enquired into, and
eaſy to be known if true, and as eaſily de-
tected if falſe.

THEY tell us in particular of ſome
Things very remarkable, ſuch as were the
ſeveral Accidents that happened about
our *Saviour's* Birth, and uſher'd him into
the World. The extraordinary Taxation
that carried his Mother to *Bethlehem*,
where *Chriſt* was to be born; the mean
Accommodation ſhe was forced to take up
with, when ſhe fell in Travail; the Viſit
of Homage paid to the new born Child,
by the *wiſe Men* from the *Eaſt*, who were
conducted

SERM. conducted to him by a Star; the hasty Re-
 II. moval of *Joseph*, and *Mary* (with the
 ~~~~~ Child) into *Egypt*, to preserve him from  
 the bloody Hands of *Herod*; and *Herod's*  
 barbarous Cruelty, in causing all the In-  
 fants from two Years old, and under, to  
 be slain throughout all the Coasts of *Beth-*  
*lehem*, and the like.

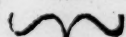
Now all Facts that are thus related,  
 and described, with the particular Circum-  
 stances of Time, and Place, and the sever-  
 al Occasions, and Motives, that influenced  
 the Persons concerned in them; are very ea-  
 sily convicted of Falseness, when they are  
 false.

AND therefore, it is not to be imagined,  
 that any *Historian*, not perfectly destitute  
 of common Sense, as well as Prudence,  
 should take Pains to be so particular, and  
 circumstantial, on Purpose to expose him-  
 self, and invalidate the Credit of all he  
 says; as most certainly he will, if he takes  
 the Confidence to report a downright Falseness,  
 and then leaves it naked to the Eye  
 of every Enquirer. It is the strongest Pre-  
 sumption in the World therefore; that that  
 Relation is true, that is thus plainly, and  
 simply

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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simply told, without any Disguise, or Concealment; because if it be not true, it necessarily almost discovers itself, and so puts an End to the *Imposture*.

S E R M.  
II.  


AND in this plain, and honest Method is the *Gospel History* written; nay, some of the Facts are such, and so circumstantiated, that 'tis impossible, but they must have been detected, and the Relaters of them sufficiently confounded, if they had been otherwise than true. Thus for Instance, the giving Sight to the Man that was born blind, and the restoring *Lazarus* to Life, after he had been four Days dead; are Facts, as we find them related in the *Gospel*, that were very nicely observed, and enquired into by the *Jews*, at the Time when they were done. And if there had been any Juggle or Collusion in these Operations, the vigilant Eye of Malice could not have fail'd of the Discovery. But instead of this, they with Envy, and Regret confess the Reality of these, and his other Miracles, but blasphemously ascribe them to some *diabolical* Power.

AND we may be sure, that such base, and malicious Misrepresenters of our Sa-  
VOL. II. E viour's



SERM. viour's Actions, were too diligent Observers of him, to let any Thing escape, that could afford them the least Matter of cavilling Censure.

II.

BUT it was all but groundless Cavil, as may be seen particularly in the last feeble Effort that they made to discredit the *Apostle's* Testimony of our Lord's Resurrection: Which Testimony, if it had been false, might have been disproved with Abundance of Ease; nay, it must have been disproved, if they had but repair'd to the *Sepulchre*, and satisfy'd their Eyes, that the Body was still there (if indeed it had been there) safe, and undisturb'd.

BUT when, notwithstanding all their Care, and Watchfulness, our Lord was risen indeed, and appear'd unto several, then they betook themselves to that very idle, ill-concerted Story, which they suborned the Soldiers to tell; that *his Disciples stole him away by Night, whilst they slept*; and yet, if they were asleep, how could they be sensible of what was done the meanwhile, how could they tell that he was not risen?

AND

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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AND if there had been any Ground for S E R M.  
that Report, no Doubt they would have II.  
done their Utmost to compleat the fortunate Discovery, especially when they were provok'd to it so soon after by his *Disciples*. For they stuck not to declare to the Face of the *Priests* themselves; *The God of our* Acts v.  
*Fathers bath raised up Jesus, whom ye slew,* 30, &c.  
*and banded on a Tree; him bath God exalted with his right Hand, to be a Prince, and Saviour; and to give Repentance to Israel, and Forgiveness of Sins; and we are his Witnesses of these Things.*

THIS, I say, was a direct Provocation to them, and their *sleepy Soldiers*, to make out the Truth of what had been so confidently alledged. And if it had been true, or believ'd to be so by themselves; we may conclude, that no Search would have been wanting to unravel the whole Plot, no Means left untry'd to recover, and expose the dead Body of that *Deceiver*, who *said, whilst he was alive, After three Days I will rise again;* and who, if he had been indeed a Deceiver, could not have passed any longer undiscover'd, notwithstanding

S E R M. this pretended Contrivance of his Disciples  
 II. to conceal it.

BUT the plain Truth is, there was not so much as Room for Deceit in this Case; nor is there Place for Suspicion in any of those Miracles wrought by the *Disciples*, after the Effusion of the Spirit upon them, at the *Feast of Pentecost*. For it would have been a Thing ridiculously vain in them, to pretend to the Gift of Tongues, if they had it not; at a Time when People were met together from all Parts of the World; at *Jerusalem*; by some of whom they must have been discovered, as soon as they opened their Mouths to speak. It had been altogether as vain, to pretend to the Gift of Healing without the Power; because the Diseased must needs be able to judge for themselves, whether they were reliev'd or no; and it would have been impossible to persuade them, that they were miraculously cured, when they found at the same Time, that they were not cured at all. Thus again, when they pretended to communicate the Power of working Miracles, by the laying on of Hands; had not such a Power

Power been really convey'd by these Means, S E R M.  
the Persons so deluded would soon have II.  
found it out by themselves, and confuted  
the pretended Disposer of a supernatural  
Power, by their own Inability upon Trial,  
to perform any such Wonders.

AND thus it appears, that the Condition,  
and Circumstances of the most memorable  
Facts related by the *Evangelists* are such;  
that they must of Necessity be true, be-  
cause they could not possibly be false, with-  
out being discovered so to be. And since  
there was no such Discovery made, we  
must conclude, that they are irrefragably  
true; nay, that 'tis morally impossible they  
should be otherwise, which is evidently  
the highest Degree of *Historical* Certainty  
that can be had, and higher perhaps than  
any other History can boast of. And  
let thus much suffice concerning the first,  
and main Branch of our Evidence for the  
*Gospel Revelation*, viz. the moral Certainty  
of the *History* itself, considered as such.  
I am next,

*Secondly*, To consider the additional E-  
vidence which it receives, from the con-  
current Testimony of other *Histories*, and



SERM. the Acknowledgment of its professed Ad-  
II. versaries.

THAT in the Reign of the Emperor *Tiberius*, there lived such a Person as *Jesus Christ*, is expressly mentioned by the *Roman Historian* \* *Suetonius*.

AND that he suffer'd under *Pontius Pilate* is also asserted by † *Tacitus*, and that he cured Diseases, and wrought many wonderful Works, is acknowledged by two of the bitterest Enemies to Christianity, ‡ *Celsus*, and *Julian*; nor was it ever disputed by any of our Opposers, *Jews*, or *Heathens*.

AND several of the most remarkable Occurrences recorded in the *Gospel*, are taken Notice of by Writers, who had no Intention to serve the *Christian Cause* by it. Particularly the Barbarity of *Herod* is stigmatiz'd in †† *Macrobius*, by that poignant

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\* Sueton. Lib. 5. cap. 25. p. 406. Edit. in Usum Delphini Paris.

† Tacit. Annal. Lib. 15. c. 44. To. II. in Usum Delphini. p. 885.

‡ Cels. apud Orig. contra Cels. Lib. 2. Julian apud Cyrillum, Lib. 6. contra Julian. p. 194. Lipsiæ 1696.

†† Macrobi. Saturnal. Lib. 2. cap. 4. p. 332. Edit. Lugd. Bat. 1670.

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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Saying used by *Augustus* concerning him; SERM.  
II.  
that it was better much being *Herod's* Swine, than his Son. And † *Tertullian* in his second Apology, appeals to the *Roman* Register of Books, for the Confirmation of that preternatural Eclipse, which happen'd at our *Saviour's* Crucifixion; and even \* *Pilate* himself, according to Custom, transmitted an Account of his Miracles, and Resurrection, to the Emperor *Tiberius*; which Account also is entred upon Record at *Rome*, and appealed to, as being there, by some of our *Apologists*.

IN short, as there are several Facts related in the *Gospel*, occasionally touch'd upon by other Writers; so there is nothing therein contain'd that is contradicted, much less refuted, and disproved by any other Writer whatsoever; not even by those that wanted no good Will, and spared for no Endeavour to undermine the Credit of *Christianity*. And this is a very fair, collateral Evidence, of the unquestionable

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† Apologetic. cap. 21. p. 20. Edit. Rigaltii.  
tulliani Apologetic. Edit. Rigaltii. p. 20. op.

\* Ter-

SERM. Truth, and Certainty of the *Evangelical*

II.

History; that it has never been in this Respect cavilled at, but always allow'd, even by its fiercest Antagonists. And the Confession of such Persons, has always been reckoned considerable enough, to add to the Credit of the Thing so acknowledged. But,

*Thirdly*, ANOTHER corroborating Evidence to the Truth of the *Gospel Revelation*, is the remarkable Correspondence, that it bears to the *Old Testament*, in the Completion of some very memorable Events there foretold; and in Particular, all the Predictions celebrated by the *Jews* themselves, as containing the exact Description of the *Messiah* to come, are most punctually fulfilled, and may be plainly descry'd by every unprejudiced Eye in the Birth, and Life, and Death, and Resurrection, and Ascension of our *Jesus*. The *Messiah* was to come into the World, according to the Notes of Time mark'd out in antient Prophecies, before the *Departure of the Scepter from Judah*, and the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; whilst the second Temple should yet be standing, and  
the

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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the daily Sacrifices not yet ceased; and just at this *Crisis* of Time, was *Jesus* born, when the Government of the *Jews* was in the Hands of a Stranger, and tributary to the *Romans*. And it is certain, that not many Years after, as *Jesus* himself also foretold; that the City of *Jerusalem* was sack'd, and the Temple laid in *Ashes*, and the People banish'd, and dispersed over the Face of the wide Earth, never more to return to the Place of their former Residence, and Worship. And 'tis remarkable, that when *Julian* the Apostate, on Purpose to baffle this Prediction, encouraged them to attempt the Rebuilding of their Temple, they were miraculously interrupted in their Work, by a sudden Earthquake, and Eruption of Fire from under the Foundations, that destroy'd both the Building, and the Builders; which is mentioned with Wonder by \* *Ammianus Marcellinus*, a Heathen Historian of that Time.

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\* Ammiani. Marcellin. Rer. Gest. Lib. 23. Cap. 1. p. 350. Edit. Vales. Paris. 1681.

AGAIN,



SERM. II. AGAIN, the *Messiah*, as the Prophet *Micah* had foretold, was to be born at *Bethlehem*, a City of *Judaea*, obscure enough, 'till rendred truly illustrious by the Birth of *Jesus*. And this 'tis very observable, was occasion'd by a very extraordinary *Taxation*, upon which every one was obliged by the Emperor's Edict, to repair to the City of their respective House, or Lineage. And *Bethlehem* was the City of *David*, of whom *Mary* was descended, and of whose Seed the *Messiah* himself was to spring: So that we are happily furnished from hence, with a double Proof, that *Jesus* is the very *Messiah*; as being of the same Family, and by that Means, through the special Direction of Providence, born at the same Place, that had been antiently assigned for his Birth.

ONCE more, *Isaiah* had prophesied, that the *Messiah* should be born of a Virgin, and this was most wonderfully fulfilled in the Conception, and Birth of the holy *Jesus*. His Mother *Mary*, after she was espoused to *Joseph*, but before they were yet come together, was surprized by a Salutation from the Angel *Gabriel*, and informed

informed of the high Honour that was designed her, that she should *conceive in her Womb, and bring forth a Son, and call his Name Jesus*: But she, conscious of her own Modesty, and Innocence, could not but reply, *How shall this be, seeing I know not a Man?* Then the Angel vouchsafed her a more particular Satisfaction, and said, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also, that holy Thing, that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.* And when accordingly, she was found with Child, Joseph her Husband took Umbrage at it, and was minded to put her away privily, not being willing to make her a public Example, by stoning her; which was the Punishment of a Virgin betrothed, that should be found to be deflower'd. But whilst the good Man was in this Perplexity of Thought, he was set at Ease, by an immediate Revelation from Heaven. *The Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a Dream, saying; Joseph thou Son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy Wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost.*

And

Luke i.  
31. 34. 35.

Deut. xxii.  
23.

Matth. i.  
20.

SERM. And from that Time forwards, *Joseph* was  
 II. entirely satisfied, and took her Home to  
 him, and cherished her as his Wife. And  
 his particular Care, and Tenderneſs over  
 the Mother, and the Child after it was  
 born, and all his future Behaviour, do e-  
 vince; that he had no Doubt remaining,  
 concerning the Truth of this unheard of  
 Miracle. So that all theſe Circumſtances  
 directly pointed at, by the antient *Prophets*;  
 the Time when, the Place where, the  
 Perſon of whom, and the Manner in which  
 the *Mefſiah* was to be born; all of them,  
 I ſay, are manifeſtly found to meet in the  
 miraculous Birth of the bleſſed *Jeſus*, in a  
 Way unknown, impoſſible to Nature, and  
 poſſible only to God, credible only upon  
 his Word; for never was any Man born  
 like as this Man was born.

Secondly, If we enquire farther into the  
 whole Tenour of the Life, and Actions of  
 the *Mefſiah*, we ſhall find the Predictions  
 of the *Prophets*, verified to a Tittle in our  
*Jeſus*. It will be too long to inſiſt upon  
 every Particular; but among other diſtin-  
 guiſhing Marks of the *Mefſiah*, he is de-  
 ſcribed as a Perſon of a very mean Ap-  
 pearance,



*Darkness rather than Light.*

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pearance, and despicable in the Eyes of S E R M.  
the World on that Account. This is I- II.  
*Isaiah's Character of him; He hath no Form* Chap. liii.  
*nor Comeliness, and when we shall see him,* 2, 3.  
*there is no Beauty in him that we should de-*  
*sire him. He is despised, and rejected of*  
*Men, we hid as it were our Faces from him;*  
*he was despised; and we esteemed him not.*  
And the Prophet Zachary descends to a Chap. ix.  
Particularity concerning him, small, and 9.  
odd enough in itself; but therefore the  
more notable in its Completion. *Behold*  
*(says he) thy King cometh unto thee; lowly,*  
*and riding upon an Ass, and upon a Colt,*  
*the Foal of an Ass.* And Jesus agreeably  
to these *Prophetical* Descriptions, appear'd  
in the meanest Condition, and met with  
the coarsest, or rather the rudest, and most  
contemptuous Rejection. Sometimes they  
despitefully reproached him, with the Ob-  
scurity of his Parentage. *Whence (say they)* Mat. xiii.  
*has this Man this Wisdom, and these mighty* 54, 55, 56.  
*Works? Is not this the Carpenter's Son? Is*  
*not his Mother called Mary? And his Bre-*  
*thren James, and Joses, and Simon, and*  
*Judas? And his Sisters are they not with*  
*us? Whence then hath this Man all these*  
*Things?*



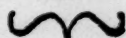
S E R M. *Things?* At other Times they despised  
 II. him for the Sake of his Country. *Shall*  
 John vii. *Christ (say they) come out of Galilee? Hath*  
 41, 42. *not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh*  
*of the Seed of David, and out of the Town*  
*of Bethlehem where David was? And*  
*where Jesus himself also was, and might*  
*have been found, had not their Eyes been*  
*blinded with Pride, and Prejudice. For*  
*even the less knowing Multitude, (but*  
*more ingenuous by much, than their*  
*Teachers) could not but acknowledge him*  
*for the Messiah, when he made his pub-*  
*lic Entry in that humble Guise, which the*  
*Prophet Zachary had so precisely foretold,*  
*even sitting upon an Ass, and a Colt the*  
*Foal of an Ass, but accompanied the mean*  
*while, with the joyful Acclamations of the*  
 Mat. xxi. *People, crying, Hosannah to the Son of Da-*  
 9. *vid; blessed is he that cometh in the Name*  
*of the Lord; Hosannah in the highest. Ano-*  
*ther Characteristic of the Messiah, assign'd*  
*by Isaiah, and other of the Prophets, is;*  
*that he was to be a Messenger of good*  
*Tidings, of good Things, a Preacher of*  
*Righteousness, an eminent Prophet sent*  
*from God, with a Power of working Mi-*  
*racles*

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racles, as the Credentials of his Commis-  
sion.

S E R M.  
II.



AND in Assertion of the same; *Jesus*, though he was the very Pattern of all Meekness, assumes all this to himself; turning in the midst of a whole Synagogue to the Place of *Isaiah*, where it was written, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me*, Chap. lxi. *because he hath anointed me to preach the* <sup>1.</sup> *Gospel to the Poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach Deliverance to the Captives, and recovering of Sight to the Blind, and to set at Liberty them that are bruised; and to preach the acceptable Year of the Lord.* And when he had rais'd their Attention, and Admiration, by the Recital of this *Prophecy*; he added with an Air of Assurance, which nothing but Truth itself could support; *This Day is this Scri-* Luke iv. 18. *pture fulfilled in your Ears.* Ver. 21. And there was so much Energy of Persuasion in his Words, such an irresistible Authority in the Truth, that they could not but give Testimony unto it, by a tacit Confession at least; and they shew themselves sufficiently confounded at it, by their pitiful Resort, (when they had nothing else to say) to their

SERM. their wonted Cavil, is not this Joseph's  
II. Son.

Ver. 22.

BUT that this very *Carpenter's Son* was able to perform, and did actually perform those supernatural Works, that were attributed by the *Prophet* to the *Messiah*, he appeals for their Conviction, even to their own Senses. For when *John* sent two of his *Disciples* to *Jesus*, with this very Question (for the Information of themselves, and others) *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* The Answer was grounded upon plain Fact, *Go* (said he) *and shew John again those Things, which ye do hear, and see. The Blind receive their Sight, the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear, the Dead are raised up, and the Poor have the Gospel preached unto them; and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.* As who could indeed, that had but the least Acquaintance with that Prediction of *Isaiab*, by him referred to, or the Patience to compare it, with its direct Accomplishment?

Mat. xi.  
3, 4, 5, 6.

AND thus, if I had Time minutely to pursue all the personal Endowments of the *Messiah*, the Badges of his Office, and his  
public

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public Performances; they would all be found to suit exactly with our *Jesus*, and eminently to concur in him. But to hasten,

S E R M.  
II.  
~

*Thirdly*, ANOTHER Note of Distinction, whereby the *Prophets* marked out the *Messiah* to us, is; that he was to be a great Sufferer, and to be persecuted, even to Death; and they point also at the Manner in which he was to die. Thus according to the Prophet *Isaiah's* Description of him, he was to be a *Man of Sorrows*, and acquainted with Grief; one whom it pleased the Lord to bruise, and to put to Grief; nay, to be esteem'd by Men, as one stricken, and smitten of God, and afflicted; to be numbred with the Transgressors, and to bear the Sins of many, to pour out his Soul unto Death, and to be cut off out of the Land of the Living, &c. And his resigning Temper, his meek Deportment under all these Sufferings is likewise expressly taken Notice of. *He was oppressed, and afflicted, yet he opened not his Mouth: He is brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before her Shearers is dumb, so he opened not his Mouth.*

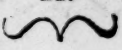
Cap. liii.

Is. lxi. 7.



S E R M. THE Preparations also to his Death, and  
 II. the Manner of executing it, and other Circumstances relating to it, are set down in express Words; as that he should be *spit*  
 Chap. 1. 6. *upon*, and *buffeted*, by *Isaiab*; that *Gall and*  
 Pf. lxi. *Vinegar should be given him to drink*, and  
 21. *that his Hands, and Feet should be pierced*,  
 Pf. xxii. *by the Psalmist*; but that *not a Bone of him*  
 16. *should be broken*, as was typified of him in  
 Exod. xii. *the Paschal Lamb: That his Garments*  
 46. *should be parted, and his Vesture disposed of*  
 Pf. xxii. *by Lot, that he should make his Grave with*  
 18. *the Wicked, and with the Rich*; and the like.

ALL which Particulars were most significantly accomplished in the Person of the blessed *Jesus*, who lived a distressed, persecuted Life, and had not so much as the common Refuge of *Foxes*, even a *Hole to bide his Head in*, but was perpetually hunted by the implacable Malice of his Adversaries, branded as a lewd Impostor, postponed to a notorious Robber, and condemned at last, as the worst of Malefactors, He was condemn'd to be crucify'd, a cruel, and ignominious sort of Death; but he had his Patience sufficiently exercised in order to it, not only by the Taunts, and  
 Insults,

Insults, but by the filthy Spittle, and rude S E R M.  
 Buffets of the Multitude, according to the II.  
 Prediction of the *Prophet*; for all which,   
 and more, he had prepared himself in that  
 submissive, and resigning Prayer; *Father,*  
*not my Will, but thine be done.* And when  
 he came to die, he had also the distasteful  
 Draught of *Gall*, and *Vinegar* offered him  
 to drink, mentioned by the *Psalmist*, in P<sup>c</sup>. lxi.  
 whose Words he breathed out his innocent 21.  
 Soul, saying; *My God, my God, why hast* P<sup>c</sup>. xxii. 1.  
*thou forsaken me?* Words very expressive  
 of those Agonies of Grief, he then felt,  
 and of that Load of Despair, that guilty  
 Sinners must needs have sunk under; had  
 not he taken the Punishment upon himself.  
 After his Crucifixion, his upper Garment,  
 or his Cloak was divided into four Parts,  
 but his seamless Coat was kept entire, and Mat. xxvii.  
 disposed of by Lot, exactly according as 35.  
 the *Psalmist* had foretold. And when the P<sup>c</sup>. xxii. 18.  
 Soldiers, whose Business it was to assist at  
 publick Executions, were ordered to dis-  
 patch him, and the two Criminals that  
 were executed with him, by breaking of  
 their Legs; they broke not *Jesus's* Legs,  
 because they saw he was dead already;  
 F 2 that

SERM. that so he might appear to be the true  
 II. *paschal Lamb*, and the *Antitype* of that,  
 of which no *Bone was to be broken*. And  
 yet, that not one *Iota* of the Scripture  
 might remain unfulfilled, one of the Sol-  
 diers (to make sure Work) *pierced his*  
*Side with a Spear*; verifying what had  
 Zach. xii. been foretold, *They shall look on him, whom*  
 10. *they have pierced*.

AND thus was he *numbred with the*  
*Transgressors*, and made his *Grave with the*  
*Wicked*, in the Estimation of his Crucifi-  
 ers: For this was what they designed by  
 inflicting this infamous Punishment upon  
 him: This was what they upbraided his  
*Disciples* with afterwards: But yet to an-  
 swer each Part of the *Prophecy*, he made  
 Mat.xxvii. his *Grave* also with the *Rich*; for *Joseph*  
 57. of *Arimathea*, an honourable Counsellor,  
 Mark xv. begged his *Body* of *Pilate*; and *Nicodemus*  
 43. a Master in *Israel* brought *Myrrh*, and *A-*  
 Lukexxiii. *loes* to embalm it with, after which it was  
 50. decently entomb'd in a *new Sepulchre hewn*  
 John xix. *out of a Rock*.  
 38, 39.

So that *Jesus* in his Sufferings was dis-  
 tinguished by all the signal Tokens, by  
 which the *Messiah* had been of Old descri-  
 bed.

bed. But to put a short End to this In-SERM.  
duction at present; I add, II.

*Fourthly*, It is prophesied of the *Messiah*, that he should rise from the Dead the third Day; *After two Days he will revive us, in the third Day he will raise us up.* So says *Hosea* of the People of *Israel*, who Chap. vi. 2. served as a *Type of Christ*, in this Respect. That his *Soul should not be left in Hell*, nor the *holy One suffered to see Corruption*; so says *David* of himself in a Figure: But it Pf. xvi. 9. must necessarily be understood of *Christ*; that he should be highly exalted. *The Lord* (says the *Psalmist*) *said unto my Lord*, Pf. cx. 2. *fit thou at my right Hand*; and that consequently to this his Exaltation he should be invested, and entrusted with the Dispensation of very extraordinary Gifts: *Thou hast* Pf. lxxviii. 18. *ascended up on high; thou hast led Captivity captive, thou hast received Gifts for Men.* All which was most gloriously accomplished in the Resurrection, and Ascension of the Lord *Jesus*, and the miraculous Distribution of the Gifts, and Graces of the Holy Ghost, at the Day of *Pentecost*.

AND the Application is made by *St. Peter*, and urged home, even to the Face of



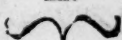
S E R M. the Jews themselves. Men and Brethren,  
 II. let me speak freely unto you, of the Pa-  
 triarch David, that he is both dead, and  
 buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto  
 this Day: Therefore being a Prophet, and  
 knowing that God had sworn with an Oath  
 unto him, that of the Fruit of his Loins,  
 according to the Flesh, he would raise up  
 Christ to sit on his Throne: He seeing this  
 before, spake of the Resurrection of Christ,  
 that his Soul was not left in Hell, neither  
 did his Flesh see Corruption. This Jesus  
 hath God raised up, whereof we are all Wit-  
 nesses: Therefore being by the right Hand  
 of God exalted, and having received of the  
 Father, the Promise of the Holy Ghost, he  
 hath shed forth this, which ye now see, and  
 hear. For David is not ascended into the  
 Heavens: But he saith of himself, The Lord  
 said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right  
 Hand, until I make thy Foes, thy Footstool.  
 Therefore let all the House of Israel know  
 assuredly, that God hath made that same  
 Jesus, whom ye have crucified both Lord,  
 and Christ.

AND this Application of St. Peter's, was  
 so manifestly grounded upon Scripture, and  
 carried

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carried such irresistible Force along with it; that three thousand Souls were immediately added to the Church there-upon.

SERM.  
II.  


AND from the Premises, I hope it may sufficiently appear; that there is very remarkable Correspondence between the *Old Testament*, and the *New*; the latter *historically* relating, and exhibiting in the Person of our *Jesus*, all the memorable Things that had been foretold of the former, and understood of the promised *Messiah*.

AND this wonderful Completion of ancient *Prophecies* in the Person of our *Saviour*, is most illustrious Evidence to the Truth of the *Gospel*; an Evidence that is strong, and must prevail, notwithstanding all the wilful, but weak Resistance, that Prejudice, and Perverseness may be able to make against it.

FOR the Things foretold of the blessed *Jesus*, and verified in him; are Things that could not be gathered by any rational Deduction, nor guessed at by any humane Sagacity, or Foresight, nor learn'd from the *Diviner's* Art. They were Things at too remote a Distance when first foretold,

SERM. to be known by any such Means: They  
 II. were Things that in the Accomplishment,  
 depended upon mere Contingencies, and  
 Events as casual, as any Thing can be; (as  
 was that Taxation of *Augustus*, which carried  
 his Mother unexpectedly to *Bethlehem*,  
 where *Christ* was to be born) upon the Election  
 of free Agents; (for such were the *Jews*,  
 the cruel Instruments of all his Sufferings)  
 nay upon God's Sovereign Will, and Power;  
 to which we must ascribe his miraculous  
 Conception, and Resurrection.

So that the wonderful Concurrence of  
 all the principal Circumstances appertaining  
 to the Person, Office, and Actions of the  
*Messiah*, being so conspicuously seen in  
 our *Jesus*; it must amount to an irrefragable  
 Proof, that he is indeed that very Prince,  
 and Deliverer, whom the *Jews* had of Old,  
 and did at that Time most impatiently expect.  
 And an Expectation it was, so well known,  
 and so much talked of throughout all the  
*East*; that it came even to the Notice of the  
*Heathens*, as may be seen in two of the  
*Roman Historians*, *Suetonius* and *Tacitus*.

AND

AND even the *Jews* themselves, the Per-  
secutors, and Crucifiers of *Jesus*, are by  
crucifying him become his Witnesses; and  
the Infidelity of them, and their Posterity,  
adds Strength to their Testimony. For all  
these Things also were prophesied of them.  
And therefore in this Sense, they may en-  
title themselves (if they please) to the  
*Building of the Tombs of the Prophets*; inas-  
much, as they have set up themselves for  
standing Monuments (as it were) of the  
Truth of their Predictions.

AND it is in Vain for the modern *Jews*  
to give the Lye to their Forefathers, by  
forcibly wresting those *Prophecies*, which  
we understand of the *Messiah*, to quite dif-  
ferent Persons, and a foreign Meaning.  
For that they do in Propriety belong to  
the *Messiah*, has been acknowledged by their  
most learned *Rabbins*, and was antiently  
the current Sense of all Interpreters. And  
if they do belong to the *Messiah*, we might  
make any impartial *Heathen* the Umpire  
between us, if he would but take the  
Pains to compare the *Gospel History*, with  
the *Prophetical Writings*; whether the  
most famous *Prophecies* therein contain'd,  
be

S E R M.  
II.



SER M. be not most surprizingly fulfilled in our

II. *Jesus.*

THE Light therefore which is reflected from the antient Predictions, upon the *Gospel*, is so convincingly clear, so dazzling bright to the *Jew*, that he cannot endure even to look upon it, he is forced to turn his Eyes from it, lest he should be illuminated, and converted: Nay, it confounds him so, that it makes him his own Accuser; in that he still holds himself obliged to maintain the sacred Authority of those Writings, which directly charge him with affected Blindness, and incurable Obstinacy. Incurable Obstinacy indeed! for it may be very rationally concluded; that if the Scripture *Prophecies*, and that Completion of them, which we contend for, had been as obvious to the Notice of the People of *China*, and *Japan*, as they have been all along to the *Jews*; that they would have long since submitted to the powerful Evidence, and confess'd the Faith of *Christ*. I say, it may be rationally concluded; because it is hard to suppose, that any People should be so wretchedly stupid, and wilfully blind; but those who had already provoked God

to inflict it, as a Judgment upon them. S E R M.  
For they rejected the very best Means of II.  
Information, and rebelled against the clear-  
est *Meridian* Light. I proceed

*Fourthly*, To the last, and highest Degree of Evidence, that we have for the *Gospel Revelation*, viz. the extraordinary, and infallible Attestation given to the Truth of it by God himself.

AND indeed the Accomplishment of those *Prophecies* we have have hitherto insisted on, is equivalent to an Attestation from God himself. For as Things contingent, and remote, and depending upon the free Will of rational Agents, could not be foreseen at a long Distance of Time, but by the infinite Wisdom of him that knoweth all Things: So neither could they be effected, but by his Almighty Power, whose Providence influenceth, and over-ruleth all Actions, and Events, both those that are really voluntary, and those that are seemingly fortuitous. Since therefore the divine Wisdom, and Power did so illustriously display themselves, first in foretelling so many strange Occurrences relating to our *Lord Jesus Christ*, and then by  
bringing

SERM. bringing them to pass by unthought of  
 II. Means, and in a most wonderful Manner;  
 this must be allow'd to be no less than a  
 Testimony from God, that his Commis-  
 sion was from *Heaven*, and his Doctrines  
 holy, and true.

BUT not to enlarge afresh upon this, we  
 have other, and more direct Attestations  
 to our *Saviour's* Commission, and Do-  
 ctrine, recorded in the *Gospel* itself; which  
 considered as a *History*, we have already  
 proved to be indubitably true. As

*First*, THE Testimony of *John Baptist*,  
 who came before him as his *Herald*, and  
*Harbinger*: *He was not that Light, but*  
*was sent to bear Witness of that Light.*  
 And he did accordingly, upon all Occa-  
 sions bear Record, that he was a Person  
 of eminent Dignity, and Authority, much  
 superior to *himself*; that he was ex-  
 traordinarily endow'd with the *Holy Ghost*,  
 and empower'd to baptize with the  
*Spirit*; that he was in short, the *Christ*,  
*that great Prophet that was to come*, even  
*the Lamb of God*, and the *Son of God*.

Now *John* was himself a *Prophet*, and  
 acknowledged, and revered as such by the  
*Jews*;

*Jews*; among whom also it was a received Maxim, that he, without farther Trial, is to be received for an undoubted *Prophet*, to whom another undoubted *Prophet* bears Testimony; because the Testimony of such a *Prophet*, is the Testimony of one divinely inspired; that is, in Effect, of God himself.

S E R M.  
II.

*Secondly*, ANOTHER extraordinary Attestation given by God to our blessed *Jesus*; was by Visions, and Apparitions, and Voices.

THUS for Instance, an *Angel* appeared to his *Virgin Mother*, to give her Notice of his supernatural Conception: And again, in a Dream to his doubting Father, to satisfy him concerning the same: The *Angels* also divulg'd the glad Tidings of his Birth, and sung him into the World with a Hymn of Praise, and joyful Congratulation. And ever after they constantly attended him, and ministred unto him in all his Temptations, and Necessities; and assisted also at his Resurrection: Nay the Holy Ghost itself took a visible Shape at his Baptism, and was discerned by *John* the Baptist, who testify'd of him, and said; *I saw the*

Luke i. 31.

Mat. i. 20.

Luke ii.

Mat.

xxviii.

Mat. iii 16.



SERM. *the Spirit of God descending from Heaven*  
 II. *as a Dove, and resting upon him.* And at

the same Time in his Hearing, there came  
 Ver. 17. a Voice from Heaven saying; *Thou art my*  
*beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:*

And the same Voice was heard again at  
 Mat xvii. his Transfiguration, saying; *This is my be-*  
 5. *loved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear*  
*ye him:* Declaring at once his Person to  
 be divine, and his Doctrine to be heavenly  
 like himself, and worthy of all Accepta-  
 tion. And at another Time when he was  
 praying, *Father, glorify thy Name:* He  
 was answered by a Voice from Heaven,  
 John xii. saying; *I have glorified it, and will glorify*  
 28. *it again.*

Now these visible Appearances, and au-  
 dible Voices, were the known Methods of  
 God's revealing himself, and his Will to  
 Men; Methods that the *Jews* in antient  
 Times had frequently been accustomed to;  
 and therefore to them they had evidently  
 all the Force of a Divine Testimony, and  
 ought to have been regarded as such.

*Thirdly*, ANOTHER extraordinary At-  
 testation afforded to our *Lord*, and to his  
 Mission, and Doctrine; was the Power of  
 Miracles,

Miracles, with which he was invested. S E R M. II.  
 And he himself appeals to this, as the most incontestible Evidence that could be given: *The Works that I do in my Father's Name* (says he) *they bear Witness* John x. 25.  
*of me.* And he afterwards asserts the Divinity of his Person, and the Truth of his Doctrine upon the same Grounds: *If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me* Ver. 37.  
*not; but if I do, though ye believe not me,* 38.  
*believe the Works; that ye may know, and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.*

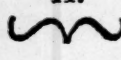
AND there could not possibly be any stronger Motives of Assent than these, nor any that were less liable to Exception.

FOR though we cannot precisely tell the utmost Extent of Nature's Power, much less of the Devil's Activity, of managing, and improving natural Causes, to his own wicked Purpose; though we are not sufficiently aware of all the strange Things that may be effected by such Means; yet some Things there are, which we certainly know cannot be effected by such Means: And in particular we can say, that the Miracles Jesus wrought, were not, could not be so produced.

No!

SERM.

II.

 No! they were most, if not all of them Works, not feasible, not possible to any Power, but that of God; who only doth great Wonders, and of whom alone such Wonders were worthy. For instance, he could discern the Thoughts, and Intentions of the Heart, which is God's peculiar Prerogative: He could *feed five hundred People with five Loaves, and two small Fishes*, leaving more afterwards in Fragments, than there was at first. And this must be by a Power not inferior to that of a *Creator*: For 'tis as easy to make a World out of nothing, as a Basket of Loaves; and nothing less than *Omnipotence* was able to do either. He could cure all Manner of Diseases, even such as had baffled all the *Physician's* Art, and such as the Patient had been born with, without any medicinal Application; with a single Word, as he did sometimes, both the deaf, and the blind; with a Touch as at other Times, nay with a Touch of his Garments only, and the Virtue thereby communicated, as he did the Woman who had the *Issue of Blood*: Nay, he could restore the Dead to Life again, at his bare Command,

Mat. ix.  
20.

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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Command, as he did, when he said, *Lazarus come forth*, to one that had been four Days dead, and began to putrify.

S E R M.  
II.

John xi.

43.

THE Miracles of *Jesus* therefore are such, as do in their Greatness, and in the Manner of their Performance bespeak an absolute Empire over Nature, and a Power perfectly Divine. Nor is it to be conceiv'd, though it were admitted to be possible, that the *Devil* should have any Hand in them: For he is too cunning (were he never so able) to work Miracles against his own Interest: He is too much a *Politician*, not to know, *That every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to Desolation*: And therefore he could never have employ'd his Skill, and Power in casting out Devils, even his own Angels, and industrious Agents for him. Nay for certain, he could never have been the Promoter of Virtue, and Holiness, and the Worship of the one true God, in Opposition to the Vanities of Idols, and the beastly Impurities of the *Heathen* Worship: And yet this was evidently the Design of *Christ's* coming into the World, and the direct Tendency of his holy *Gospel*. And therefore it must be

Mat. xii.  
25.

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G

concluded



SER M. concluded; that the Hand of God was  
 II. with him, and that he was a Man approved of God, by such Signs, and Wonders, as none but God himself indeed could do, but such to be sure, as the *Devil* would not have done for him, if he could.

*Fourthly and Lastly*, ANOTHER extraordinary Attestation, which God gave to our *Saviour*, was by the Gift of *Prophecy*, with which he was eminently endow'd, and which he signaliz'd upon several Occasions. He foretold the Treachery of *Judas*, the Denial of *Peter*, and the Desertion of all the rest of his *Disciples*; the Manner of his own Death, the Time of his Resurrection, the Communication of the *Holy Ghost* after his Ascension, and the Propagation of the *Gospel* all over the World, by the Ministry of Men, in their Education mean, and illiterate enough, and furnish'd for their Work with Power from on high; and enabled to speak all Languages, as the *Spirit* gave them Utterance; the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the Dispersion of that incredulous, and *stiff-neck'd* People. These, and several other Things he foretold, which in the Event proved remarkably

Mat. xxvi.  
21.

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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markably true; and which, in being full-<sup>S E R M.</sup>  
fill'd, some of them carried a double Pro-<sup>II.</sup>  
portion of Evidence with them, that of  
*Miracles*, as well as *Prophecies*.

In particular his Resurrection from the Dead, was a Work so much above the Power of any natural, or created Agent, that no Man could have foreseen it of himself, unless it had been reveal'd to him by God; who alone was able to accomplish it: And therefore after its Accomplishment, 'twas a plain Demonstration, that his Knowledge, and Power were both equally divine; *Being declared* (as St. Paul <sup>Rom. i. 4:</sup> expresseth it) *to be the Son of God with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection.*

AGAIN, The Gift of Tongues was something so infinitely disproportionate to all natural Means, and indeed so utterly unattainable; that Nobody could possibly foretel it, but who could also bestow it; and therefore he that did both, must be allow'd to be infinite, both in Knowledge, and Power.

ONCE more, the prodigious Success, and Progress of the *Gospel*, by Means so seem-

SERM. ingly weak, against an Opposition so violent, and strong; was a Thing so far above all humane Probability; that Nobody would have depended upon it, but who could certainly foretel it, and Nobody could certainly foretel it, but who could overawe, and controul, all the Prejudices, Inclinations, and Interests of Mankind.

AND thus these miraculous Works were more truly wonderful for being foretold, and the Predictions were more *divinely prophetic*, because they could not be accomplish'd without a Miracle; and both together do add a double Lustre, as well as Force to the Evidence of *Christianity*.

I MIGHT here add as a Confirmation to all that has been said; that even as our Lord had promised, and foretold, the Power of working Miracles, was derived upon his *Apostles*. For besides the Gift of Tongues already mentioned, they were enabled to cure all Manner of Diseases, to cast out Devils, to strike dead, to restore to Life; in one Word, they had absolutely the Ascendant over all the Power of the Enemy: And how did they perform all these mighty Wonders? In the Name of the *cru-*  
*cified*

*cified Jesus*; at the single Mention of S E R M.  
II. which, all Nature bowed its Head; and the very *Devils* trembled, and obey'd. An undeniable Argument this! that he himself was the *Despotick* Lord of all, in whose Name, such ample Commissions were granted, enlarged also with a Power of farther Delegation. For on whomsoever the Apostles laid their Hands, to them the Holy Ghost was given, and manifested itself by the like Signs, and Wonders: But 'tis too late now to insist farther upon these Topicks.

IN the mean while, I hope it is sufficiently plain, that the Truth of the *Gospel Revelation* is most extraordinarily attested by God himself.

AND this divine Attestation renders its Authority unquestionable, and its Certainty infallible, even as infallible as God himself is.

FOR in summing up the Evidence that has been given, it will appear; that the *Gospel History* as such, has all the Credibility that any *History* can have, and more than any other *History* hath; as being written by Men of sufficient Abilities, and unsuspected Integrity, who also seal'd to the



SERM. Truth of what they wrote, with their

II. Hearts dearest Blood. And besides, the  
 Facts which they relate are many of them  
 such, and so circumstantiated, (as for Ex-  
 ample the Resurrection of our Lord) that if  
 they had been false, it could not have been  
 conceal'd, it must of Necessity have been  
 discover'd; and therefore no such Disco-  
 very being made, we must conclude, that  
 they are certainly true.

MOREOVER, this *History* is confirm'd by  
 the concurrent Testimony of other *Histo-*  
*ries*, and the Acknowledgment of profess'd  
 Adversaries.

AND then, when we come to consider it  
 as a Revelation from God, it bears a re-  
 markable Correspondence to the Relation  
 that was given to the *Jews*, which is in-  
 deed a very material Circumstance; because  
 it must not be supposed, that two *Revela-*  
*tions*, and both from God, should contra-  
 dict each other. This therefore is so far  
 from being the Case of the *Gospel Revela-*  
*tion*, that it is in Effect the exact *Counter-*  
*part* of the Revelation which went before  
 it, as exhibiting the plain Accomplishment  
 of antient *Prophecies*, which were by the  
*Jews*

*Jews* constantly applied to their expected *Messiah*, and are now remarkably verified in our *Jesus*, whom therefore we believe to be the *Christ*. S E R M.  
II.

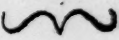
AND *Lastly* to crown all, it has the direct Attestation, and Approbation of Heaven; for it was spoken at first by a Person, who had an eminent *Prophet* for his Forerunner, and Witness: Who was declared to be the Son of God, by Angels, and Voices; who had the Power of Miracles, and Prophecy for the Credentials of his divine Commission: And it was confirmed to us by them that heard him, *God also* Heb. i. 4.  
*bearing them Witness with Signs, and Wonders, and diverse Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will.*

AND what stronger, what clearer Evidence can there be than this? For 'tis manifest, that nothing that depends upon Testimony can be better attested; nay, nothing of like Nature was ever in all Points so well attested as the *Gospel*.

AND if the *Gospel* be false after all, it is a Falshood that has all the plainest, and most indisputable Marks of Truth. But 'tis directly inconsistent with the Veracity,

SERM. and Goodness of God, to suffer such a  
 II. gross Cheat to pass upon the Belief of Man-  
 kind, without so much as the Possibility  
 of a Discovery. His Veracity will not per-  
 mit him to bear Witness to a Lye, and to  
 be instrumental in deceiving his Crea-  
 tures, and that unavoidably: And his  
 Goodness can never be consenting, that  
 his Creatures should be unavoidably de-  
 ceiv'd, in Matters of such vast Importance  
 as the *Gospel* delivers. So that we have  
 the same Evidence for the Truth of the  
*Gospel*, that we have for the Veracity, and  
 Goodness of God; and therefore in the  
 Upshot of all, my Conclusion stands im-  
 moveably firm, viz. that the *Gospel* Reve-  
 lation, is propos'd to our Belief with the  
 very highest, and brightest Degree of Evi-  
 dence.

THE just Inference from this whole Dis-  
 course is plainly this; that having all this  
 clear, and positive Evidence to the Truth  
 of our holy Religion, it is the most ratio-  
 nal Thing in the World to build our Faith  
 securely upon it, with an entire Acquies-  
 cence of Mind; and the most irrational on  
 the other Hand to stagger to and fro thro'  
 Unbelief,

Unbelief, or to be moved by the Shock of S E R M.  
any cavilling Objections, or puzzling Diffi- II.  
culties, that may be thrown in our Way. 

FOR when we have all the Proof, that is proper in a Case, and as clear, and full, as the Nature of the Case will admit; and nothing at all that can be alledged in Disproof of the main Evidence; surely this ought to be a determining Motive of Assent, the Mind in this Situation, seems to be arrived at its natural Point of Rest; and there to abide, is the Argument of a sound Judgment.

ON the contrary, it betrays Weakness, and Irresolution, and want of a due Poise in the Judgment, to float in Uncertainty after such a Determination; to seek for more Proof, than the Case doth require, or will admit; or to yield up the Proof we are in Possession of, to certain *sceptical* Doubts, and Queries, that do not shake the least Part of our Foundation.

AND this is the very Case of *Christianity*, we have all the clearest, positive Proof, that the Nature of Things would admit: We have the indubitable Faith of *History* better supported, and corroborated, than e-

ver



S E R M. ver any *civil History* was; we have the  
 II. wonderful Correspondence of the *Old*, and  
*New Testament*, as Counterparts to each other, and we have the *Jew*, even our im-  
 bittered Enemy, by truly asserting the  
 divine Inspiration of the former; witness-  
 ing against his Will, to that of the latter:  
 We have *Prophecies*, and *Miracles* lending  
 one another mutual Light, and Strength;  
 in fine, we have all the manifest Tokens of  
 divine Wisdom, and Power, that could be  
 requisite to give Credit to a *Revelation*  
*from Heaven*.

Is there not then all imaginable Reason  
 to embrace the *Gospel* as such? And is there  
 the least Dram of Reason in the other Scale,  
 to make the Ballance dance, or totter?

Is our *History* refuted, or the least in-  
 validated? Are our Facts denied, or disputed  
 by *Jew*, or *Heathen*? Doth not the Com-  
 pletion of the antient *Prophecies* by Opera-  
 tions truly miraculous, bring a Conviction  
 with it, that is scarce to be resisted? And  
 is not the weak, but wilful Resistance of  
 the modern *Jews*, by wresting those *Pro-*  
*pheties* to a foreign Sense, (which were  
 honestly understood of the *Messiah*) at  
 once,

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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S E R M.

II.

once, a Proof of their incurable Blindness, and Hardness of Heart; and a Verification of what the blessed *Jesus* expressly foretold of them. In one concluding Word, is not our holy Faith not only unshaken, but even untouch'd by any Objection directly levelled against the Foundations of it? What is it then can leave the Mind of a rational Man undetermined, in this important Matter? Or what is there to unsettle it, if once determined? 'Tis true, there are Mysteries reveal'd in Scripture, that far transcend our low Capacities: But is it any Wonder that God should reveal Things beyond all Comprehension? And is this any justifiable Cause of disbelieving such mysterious Truths, suppos'd to be reveal'd from God? Or is it any Disproof of the Revelation itself, when otherwise sufficiently attested? No certainly! this would be absurd in the highest Degree; for it would be to imagine the shallow Capacity of the Creature, to be equal to all the Depths of Knowledge, and Wisdom in the Creator.

It is possible, that there may be some Niceties in Scripture *Chronology*, not easy

to

SERM to be adjusted, some Variations not easily  
 II. accounted for? But what if it should be  
 granted, that there are some Perplexities of  
 this Sort, or even that some small *Errata*  
 were crept in, of no Moment, through the  
 Change of a *numeral* Letter, or other Note  
 of Time? But is there any Thing to e-  
 vince, that *Jesus* did not appear, when all  
 the remarkable Notes fell in together, that  
 pointed out the Messiah? Are there any  
 Calculations, that amount to a Proof, I  
 don't say, but gives Rise to the least Que-  
 stion, that he was not born, and lived,  
 and died about that Time, and in that Man-  
 ner, which the *Gospel* relates? Is there any  
 Contradiction set up against the Truth of  
 his Resurrection, Ascension, or the Gift of  
 Tongues, and other miraculous Powers  
 consequent thereupon? Is there any Thing  
 in short, that strikes at our Fundamentals?  
 If not, (as for certain there is not) then  
 without all Doubt, it is the most unrea-  
 sonable Piece of Folly, and Rashness to  
 yield them up, for the Sake of any By-  
 Questions, and pitiful Cavils, that reach  
 not home to the Point.

AGAIN, What if it should be granted,  
 that

that there are Things hard to be understood, Passages in Scripture hard to be reconciled, without a great deal of elaborate Enquiry, and critical Learning? Is it therefore a reasonable Thing, that the unlearned, (or which is worse the *half learn'd*, and *unstable*) Is it any tolerable Excuse for their Ignorance, and Instability, to wrest even these difficult Scriptures to their own Destruction, on Account of those Difficulties which they themselves are unable to resolve, and equally unwilling to see the good Office done, even by a much better Hand?

ONCE more, should I be so liberal as to grant, that there is a great Number of various Readings in Scripture, and a few such, as seem to leave the Meaning of some considerable Text something ambiguous? And what's the Consequence from hence; that there is no certain Sense to be gathered out of any Text of Scripture? That is too extravagant for any Body to say. Will it be said then, that any moral Precepts, or any Article of Faith depends wholly, and solely upon any such Passage, as thro' a Variety of Readings carries no determi-

nate



S E R M. nate Sense with it? That's more than the  
 II. boldest Gainfayer can maintain, and there-  
 fore the weakest Believer ought not to be  
 stagger'd by it.

FOR the Foundation still standeth sure, unmoved, and immoveable; and it is the truest Exercise of our Reason to rest upon it, and the most preposterous Abuse of Reason, to depart one Hair's Breadth from it; which was the Inference drawn from the foregoing Discourse, and I hope is sufficiently made out.

FOR these Exceptions upon By-Points, do no more affect the main Conclusion, than the loosening a few Pins in the Roof, would shock the Foundation of a strong Fabrick.

AND if Mysteries, or Difficulties in a divine Revelation, are a sufficient Objection to the Belief of it, when 'tis proved so to be, by the most proper, and convincing Arguments; then there is hardly any Thing in Nature worthy of Belief. For all Nature is big with Mysteries, and Difficulties; and a Man must not believe even the Existence of Matter; because the mutual Cohesion of its Parts is a Mystery,  
 which

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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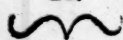
which those who are deepest in the Secrets S E R M.  
of Nature, cannot fathome; nay, a Man II.  
must not believe even that the Sun shines,  
because in the *Phænomena* of Light, there  
are Difficulties not yet explained by any  
*Philosopher*. But at this Rate there is no-  
thing to be believ'd, though clear, even to  
Demonstration, if any collateral Doubt or  
Difficulty may be rais'd upon it; which is  
a Way, that would lose us in a Maze of  
Absurdities, and leave us afloat in end-  
less *Scepticism*.

AND yet this is the modern Method of  
attacking our common *Christianity*; which  
though it has all the most indubitable  
Marks of a *Revelation* from *Heaven*, that  
it was fit for God to give, or reasonable  
for Men to desire; yet is it not without  
its Difficulties. Difficult Questions con-  
cerning Matters of an abstruse Nature, or  
of remote Antiquity; concerning nice Points  
in *Chronology*, or the Reconciliation, or In-  
terpretation of obscure Passages in Scri-  
pture, &c.

AND this being a light Sort of Armour  
that is easily put on, and soon borrow'd  
from the School of *Infidelity*; every Smat-  
terer

S E R M.

II.



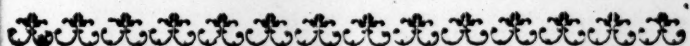
terer upon this small Stock, is ready to seat himself in the *Scorner's Chair*, and draw a Circle about him, and take his *Bible* to Pieces, and treat it, as if it were a Bundle of *popish Legends*. Vain and impious the weak Attempt! *For all Flesh is Grass, and*  
 1 Pet. i. 24. *all the Glory of Man as the Flower of Grass; the Grass withereth, and the Flower fadeth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.* And the boldest Contradiction of the Sinner is so far from discrediting it, that it is a noble Confirmation to its Truth, and Power; since these its audacious (but feeble) Opposers are foretold therein, and described in their proper Colours. *Let us take Heed then, Brethren, lest there be in any of us an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God; and from the Word of his eternal Truth.* And let us take care that we be not of the Number of those,  
 Heb. xix. 34. *who draw back unto Perdition, but of them who believe to the saving of the Soul.* Which God grant, in and thro' *Jesus Christ our Lord.* To whom with the Father, and Holy Spirit, be ascribed (as is due) all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, and for evermore. *Amen.*

S E R M O N



## S E R M O N III.

The Reason why Men love Dark-  
ness rather than Light.



JOHN iii. 19.

*And this is the Condemnation, that  
Light is come into the World, and  
Men loved Darkness rather than  
Light, because their Deeds were  
Evil.*



THE three Points that offer S E R M.  
themselves to our Observa- III.  
tion, and Enquiry in these  
Words, (you may remember)

are these.

VOL. II.

H

I. First,



SERM.

III.

I. *First*, WHAT is meant by that *Light*, which is here said to be *come into the World*.

II. *Secondly*, How it came to pass, that Men should reject this *Light*, and wilfully shut their Eyes against it; *They loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil*.

III. *Thirdly*, How just, and inevitable the *Condemnation* of such Men is; *this*, says he (that shall finally be their Judge) is the *Condemnation*, that Men loved *Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil*.

I. As to the *First* Point, what is meant by the *Light*, which is here said to be *come into the World*; I thought it might with good Reason be understood, of the Doctrine of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, as it is reveal'd to us, in his holy *Gospel*.

AND this *Gospel* Revelation, I have endeavour'd to shew, is very aptly resembled to *Light*, as in several other Respects, so most eminently in these two.

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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THE *First* is, that as *Light* makes all Things visible, so the *Gospel* clearly discovers, and makes manifest some of the most important Truths of Religion, such as were altogether unknown, or but imperfectly known before.

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THE *Second* is, that as *Light* is itself of all other Things the most conspicuous; so the *Gospel* Revelation is proposed to our Belief with the highest, and brightest Degree of Evidence.

THE first Part of this Resemblance I have made out, by instancing in those noble, and happy Discoveries concerning the Nature of God, and his divine Worship, and concerning the Redemption of Man, and his Duty, and Happiness, and the best Means, and Motives to perform the one, and attain to the other; in all which Things, the World has been marvellously enlightned by the *Gospel* of *Christ*, in Comparison of that Darkness of Ignorance, in which the *Gentiles* were involved, and that Dimness of Knowledge, which was imparted to the *Jews*.

THE second part of the Resemblance I have also made out, by producing the incontestable Evidence we have for the Truth

H 2

of

SER M. of the *Gospel*; and examining it Branch by  
 III. Branch, as it consists, partly in the moral  
 Certainty of the *History* itself, consider'd as  
 such; and partly in the concurrent Testi-  
 mony of other *Histories*, and the Acknow-  
 ledgment of its professed Adversaries; and  
 partly again in the remarkable Correspondence  
 that it bears to the *Old Testament*,  
 and the Predictions therein recorded, but  
 principally in the extraordinary Attestation  
 that is given to it by God himself, in Signs  
 and Wonders, and diverse Miracles, and  
 Gifts of the *Holy Ghost*; the Power of  
 which so eminently resided in *Christ*, and  
 was as wonderfully delegated to his Disci-  
 ples.

ALL which taken together, renders the  
 Authority of the *Gospel* perfectly unque-  
 stionable, and its Certainty infallible; even  
 as infallible as God himself. Inasmuch as  
 'tis utterly inconsistent with the Veracity,  
 and Goodness of God, in a Matter of such  
 vast Importance, and in which his Ho-  
 nour is so nearly concerned, to suffer a  
 Deceit, or Falshood to pass upon the  
 World, attended with all the strongest  
 Motives of Credibility, and the most indis-  
 putable

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putable Marks of Truth, on Purpose to lead Men into Error, and confirm them in it. SERM.  
III.

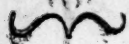
AND since this is a Thing impossible to be supposed; it must be allow'd, that the Evidence for the Truth of the *Gospel*, is as conspicuous as *Light*, and the *Gospel* is as true, as Truth itself. All which I have proved at large in two foregoing Discourses: And the Proof was such, as I could entirely acquiesce in myself; and I think might safely be depended on by *others*.

BUT yet one Thing there is after all, that has been said, which though it does not weaken our Proof, yet it looks at first Sight, a little odd, and unaccountable: For if there are such wonderful, and such Important Discoveries in the *Gospel* of *Christ*: If it contains Sayings so infallibly true, and so worthy of Acceptation: It might fairly have been expected, that all Men should come into it, as soon as once it was proposed to them. It is strange indeed, it should meet with so much Opposition, if it was accompanied with all that plain, and powerful Evidence, that is alledged for it.



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AND yet it is notorious enough, that it was at first very scornfully rejected, and violently opposed by both *Jews*, and *Heathens*, *Rabbins*, and *Philosophers*; and is still cavilled at, or embraced but by Halves, by some of the wise *Disputers* of *this World*.

BUT it is not difficult to account for all this: For in the *first* Place it is observable, that *Christ* himself had foretold, and forewarn'd his Apostles of that unkind Reception, and fierce Opposition, which they were like to meet with in the Publication of the *Gospel*, and had promised withal that they should surmount all these Difficulties, and be enabled to carry on their Work, with incredible Success, in Despite of all their Adversaries; and so they did. And the *Gospel* by their Ministry made its Way with irresistible Force, and took a swift Course through the World, maugre all the strongest Confederacies of Prejudice, and Interest, Policy, and Power, Malice, and Cruelty that were united together against it. And the Completion of this last Prediction, and Promise of our *Saviours*, is a most astonishing Confirmation of the Truth

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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Truth of the *Gospel*: For nothing but S E R M.  
mighty Truth itself could have prevail'd III.  
at this prodigious Rate, and forced its very  
Enemies to come in for its Witnesses; for  
so indeed they were, and Fellow Helpers  
in some Sort to the Apostles, by impotent-  
ly, and vainly opposing, what *Heaven* had  
decreed to prosper, without any humane  
Aid.

THE violent, but vain Opposition there-  
fore that was made to the *Gospel* at first,  
is so far from implying any want of Evi-  
dence, that it is itself an additional Evi-  
dence; and if all other Proofs were want-  
ing, a sufficient Attestation to the Truth  
of it.

BUT still, if the Evidence for the *Go-  
spel* was so very cogent as is pretended:  
This leads us to enquire, which was the

II. *Second* Thing to be enquired from  
my Text, how it came to pass, that it  
was not universally embraced, or that any  
should continue blind in the midst of all this  
glorious *Light*. But the Text gives a  
plain, and easy Account of this also. *Men  
loved Darkness* (it seems) *rather than Light,*  
H 4 *because*

SERM. *because their Deeds were Evil.* And that  
 III. so it might come to pass, we shall soon be  
 satisfied; if we consider,

*First*, IN General, that though the Gospel did come confirmed with the very highest Degree of Evidence, that the Nature of the Thing would admit; yet it was not such Evidence (nor was it fit it should) as would offer Violence to Men's Faculties, and make it an impossible Thing to disbelieve it, and therefore no Virtue to believe it; no! the *Gospel* has always had Reason on its Side, abundantly enough to satisfy any Man's Understanding, that is considerate, and attentive. But then 'tis in Men's own Power, and Choice, whether they will consider, and attend to it or no: They may (if they please) condemn it in the gross, unheard, and unexamined; which in all Probability was the Case of many at first, and is of some still. And even after the Understanding is clearly convinced, without any Shadow of a Doubt remaining; the Will may still hold out, and deny its hearty Assent, even to the most demonstrable Truth. And the Faith required of a *Christian*, consisting (as it does)

not

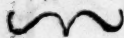
not in the bare Conviction of the Under-<sup>S E R M.</sup>  
standing, but in the entire Concurrence,<sup>III.</sup>  
and Approbation of the Will also; no

Wonder that many should be so slow of Heart to believe; to believe a Doctrine so unacceptable to Flesh, and Blood, so opposite in many Parts of it, to the corrupt Lusts, and Inclinations of Men, which having got Possession of the Affections, and being long indulged by habitual Practice, were too sturdy to give Way to the naked Force of Truth, and too dear to be sacrificed to it. Men were loth to part with their old beloved Sins, for the Sake of a new Religion; and therefore they chose rather to reject this inconvenient Religion right, or wrong, than to embrace it upon such uneasy, and unequal Terms: And thus it has been, and thus it will be; if Men will resolve to keep their Eyes shut (as if they will, they may) they do, and must deprive themselves of all Benefit of the *Light*; even the *Gospel* itself in all its *Meridian* Splendour must be hid to them; and if when they do open their Eyes, they will look upon it no otherwise, than through the Mist of their own inveterate  
Preju-



S E R M.

III.

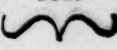
John iii.  
20.

Prejudices, and sensual Lusts; it is impossible they should have a clear Prospect of the Truth, or that they should discern the Beauty, and Excellency of the *Christian* Religion; or if they do, that they should patiently endure the Sight of that, which was so manifest a Reproof, and Reproach to their own Practice. For as our *Evan-gelist* has it in the Verse following my Text. *Every one that doeth Evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd.*

It is no such unaccountable Thing therefore, that Men should resist the clearest Evidence of Truth, and *reject* (as St. Luke says, *Acts* vii. 30. of the Lawyers) *the Counsel of God against themselves.* But this will still be more apparent, if we enter into the Detail of those vitious Prepossession, and evil Habits, ill Opinions, and Practices which tempted Men at first, (and have the same Influence still) to *love Darkness rather than Light*, for no other Reason but *because their Deeds were Evil*, and could not bear the Light. And

*First*, ONE great Obstacle, that kept back many of the *Jews*, and *Gentiles*, from discerning,

discerning, and embracing the Truth, as it is in *Jesus*; was their blind Bigottry, and Zeal for the Way they have been train'd up in, and the unreasonable Prejudice they had taken up against our *Saviour's* Person, and his Doctrine.

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III.  


THUS the *Jews* in particular, were zealous above Measure for their Law, and the Traditions of their Fathers. But so miserably blind they were, with all their Zeal; that they overlook'd, both the true Meaning, and Construction, and the main Scope, and Design of the Law itself, which was to shadow forth good Things to come, and to lead them to the Knowledge of the true *Messiah*. And though they lived in perpetual Expectation of this *Messiah*, and their Expectation seem'd to be rais'd to the Height, about the Time that *Jesus* appear'd in the World: And though he appear'd with all the distinguishing Marks of the true *Messiah*, exactly agreeing with those antient Predictions, and Types, and Figures that stood upon Record in their own Books; I say, notwithstanding all this, when they saw the very Person they long'd for; they could discern no *Form*, nor *Comeliness*,

SERM. *Comeliness, no Beauty in him, that they*  
 III. *should desire him.* That is, none of that  
 external Pomp, and Grandeur, in which  
 they hoped to see the *Messiah* make his Ap-  
 pearance, and with which they had pleas-  
 ed themselves so much in Imagination;  
 that they were perfectly enraged, that a  
 Person of such obscure Birth, and so mean  
 a Condition should presume to take so high  
 a Character upon him. And therefore,  
 notwithstanding all the mighty Works  
 that he wrought, they conspired to put an  
 End to his Pretensions, by putting him to  
 Death; stupidly ignorant the mean while,  
 that as other Scriptures were remarkably  
 fulfilled in him, so this also was written,  
 and that thus *it behoved Christ to suffer.*  
 And even the Men that dwelt at *Jerusa-*  
*lem*, and the Rulers, because they knew  
 him not, neither the Voices of the *Pro-*  
*phets which are read every Sabbath Day;*  
 they have fulfilled *them* in condemning  
*him*; and their *Posterity* have fulfilled them  
 too, by being scandalized at *Christ* cruci-  
 fied, for the Sake of those Sufferings, of  
 which their Fathers were the wicked In-  
 struments. Thus did the prejudicated Zeal  
 of

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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of the *Jews*, betray them into the grossest, S E R M.  
but most culpable Ignorance, that ever a- III.  
ny People was blinded with; and that Ig-  
norance made them guilty of a most de-  
testable Wickedness, first in rejecting, and  
then in murdering the *Lord of Life*.

AND the *Gentiles* were as much bigotted  
in their Way, as the *Jews*; and for the  
same Reason great Enemies many of them  
to *Christianity*. The *Philosophers* were  
great Pretenders to deep Science, and Wis-  
dom; and therefore the Simplicity of the  
*Gospel* was contemptible in their Eyes.  
And both they, and the Generality of the  
People had a mighty Veneration for An-  
tiquity, and Tradition, and as much an  
Aversion to Novelties in Religion. And  
therefore St. *Paul* was encountred at *A-*  
*thens*, as a *Babbler*, and *Setter forth* of  
*strange Gods* (by the *Epicureans*, and *Sto-*  
*icks*,) when he *preached Jesus, and the Re-* Acts xvii.  
*surrection*. The *Epicureans* were an *Athe-* 18.  
*istical Sect*, that deny'd a Providence, tho'  
they allow'd a God: That is, a supine,  
and lazy Being like themselves; who were  
wholly devoted to Ease, and Pleasure.  
And 'tis no Wonder that they should take  
Offence



SERM. Offence at the Doctrine of the *Resur-*  
 III. *rection*, which supposed them accountable  
 in another Life, for what they did in  
 this.

THE *Stoics* were *Materialists*, and therefore had no Notion of the Permanency of the Soul, or any future State; and besides, they held that all Things were bound up by a fatal Necessity, and therefore had no Disposition to believe, or acknowledge God's free Goodness, and wise Providence, in sending his Son to be the *Saviour* of the *World*. And yet in him they might have seen if they would, that gallant Sight which \* *Seneca* will have to be an Entertainment fit for God himself; that is to say, "A Man of Fortitude, "match'd with sore Adversity, but perfectly superior to it".

IN short, all the rest of the *Philosophers* had their several Tenets, which if we had Time to examine them, would appear some or other of them to be very inconsistent with the main Principles of *Christianity*.

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\* *Senec. de Providentiâ. p. 133. Op. Edit. Lips. 1652.*

*Darkness rather than Light.*

III

Besides that, the persecuted State of the *Christians* was improv'd into an Argument against the Truth of their Religion, and made People not only backward to embrace it, but apt (without farther Enquiry) both to condemn, and to despise it.

SERM.  
III.  
~

AND under all these violent Prejudices, 'tis no Wonder, that many should chuse to continue ignorant of so ungrateful a Doctrine, or fancy themselves to be more knowing than the illiterate Men that taught it: But 'tis truly wonderful, that amidst all these Discouragements, so many of the better, and more discerning sort of *Philosophers*, and *Orators*, as well as others, should subscribe to mere Force of Truth, and become such early Converts, as they did to the Faith of *Christ*.

AND the Power of Bigottry, and Prejudice, is not impair'd by Age, it is still, and always will be one great Impediment to the Progress of the *Gospel*, and the Reception of the Truth in the darker Corners of the Earth. And even where the Light of the *Gospel* does shine, it has ever had its fatal Effects, in obscuring, or adulterating,

SER M. rating, and perverting the Truth; and in  
 III. stiffening People in Error.

THUS for Instance, there is a Christian Church we know, in which Infallibility is the *supreme Pastor's* high Prerogative; and implicate Faith, and blind Obedience, the simple *Laick's* slavish Duty; and whilst under this Pretext, the greatest Absurdities are imposed upon them, both in Matters of Belief, and Practice; the good People are carefully bred up, in most profound, and devout Ignorance; and that Ignorance is inspirited with a furious Zeal, that makes them damn all that differ from them, or pretend to instruct them better.

THESE are the blessed Effects of *Papish* Bigottry, in Abhorrence of which, some have run blindfold into the opposite Extreme, and cry'd down all Manner of Regularity, and Order, and Decency, and Reverence in the Worship of God; as downright *Popery*. And such popular Outcries as these, (weak as they are) were once loud, and strong enough to shake the Foundations of the best constituted Church upon Earth. Such has been the Effect of *Protestant* Prejudice.

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NAY, there are those amongst us, who S E R M.  
will be called *Protestants*, though they can III.  
scarce be called *Christians*; who rather  
than the *Pope* shall engross all Infallibility  
to himself, set up every Man for an in-  
fallible Spirit of his own, and appeal to  
the *Light within* them, from the Light of  
the *Gospel*; and rely upon a *Christ* within  
them too, instead of *Christ* incarnate. And  
if any one goes about to confute them,  
though by the plainest *Scripture* Argu-  
ments, it is all but carnal Reasoning with  
them; and they are above such *weak*, and  
*beggarly* Elements; rich in their own Con-  
ceit, of spiritual Knowledge, and imme-  
diate Illumination; and therefore impreg-  
nable in their Error; these are the happy  
Fruits of an *enthusiastic* Zeal.

AND we meet with Instances of Bigot-  
try now adays, (if without a Solecism it  
may be so called) not for a false Religion,  
but against all Religion. The Pretence is  
against *Superstition*; and all the most essen-  
tial Parts of the *Christian* Religion, under  
that Colour are arraigned, and condemn'd  
as *Superstitious*. And so through the Sides  
of our blessed *Saviour*, (thus *crucified a-*  
VOL. II. I *fresh*)



SERMON. *fresh*) the very Vitals of natural Religion  
 III. are struck at, and downright *Atheism*, and  
 universal *Scepticism* advanced; and which  
 is the Monstrousness of the Attempt, the  
 bigotted *Atheists* take indefatigable Pains,  
 to make others, as much the *Children* of  
*the Devil*, as themselves; and this in or-  
 der (such is their impudent Mockery) to  
 make them both better *Subjects*, and bet-  
 ter *Christians*.

I PRODUCE these modern Instances to  
 shew, that Bigottry, which makes People  
 adhere with extreme Fondness to the Pre-  
 judices they first suck'd in, and the Errors  
 they have been all along nursed up in, is  
 a perpetual Obstruction to the Propaga-  
 tion of Truth; and very mischievous to  
 the *Christian* Religion. But to proceed

*Secondly*, AND more briefly, the Love of  
 this World, and an undue Regard to secu-  
 lar Interest, was from the beginning a main  
 Hindrance to the Progress of *Christianity*,  
 among both *Jews*, and *Gentiles*; and is, as  
 to the Efficacy, and Power of it, among  
 those that called themselves *Christians*.

THE *Scribes*, and *Pharisees* were the  
 great Leaders amongst the *Jews*, and highly

esteemed, both for their exact Knowledge S E R M.  
 in the Law, and the strict Observation of III.  
 it. And this gave them an entire Possession of the People's Hearts, and their Pur-  
 ses: And this yielded them a perpetual  
 Harvest. Their *Cups*, and *Platters*, tho'  
*clean'd* without, with Abundance of Nicety,  
*were full of Extortion*, as our Saviour told Mat. xxiii.  
 them. They lived upon the Spoil; nay, 25.  
 and their pretended Sanctity was the Bait,  
 with which they caught their silly Prey.  
 For as they are taxed again in the same  
 Chapter, *They devour'd Widows Houses,* 14.  
*and for a Pretence made long Prayers*; e-  
 ven whilst they were swallowing the de-  
 licious Morsel. And when they were de-  
 tected in these vile Arts, and branded as  
*Hypocrites*, as they deserved; they per-  
 ceived that the People's Veneration would  
 sink apace, and their Profit thence arising  
 cease a Course; and being incensed at this,  
 they set themselves Might and Main to  
 oppose this new *Teacher*, whose heavenly  
 Doctrine, and holy Life, they found would  
 quite ruine their Reputation, which was  
 in Truth as ill-gotten, and held with as

SER M. had a Title, as was the Money that they  
 III. squeez'd from their deluded Admirers.

AND no Doubt, the *Pagan Priests*, who lived upon the Cheat of *Oracles*, and the *Sacrifices* that were offer'd in their *Temples*, and the *Gifts* that were brought thither; they, I say, no Doubt, and all that had any Relation to them, thought themselves nearly concern'd to oppose this new Way of *Worship*; that was likely to deprive them of a comfortable Livelihood. This was it, we know, that made *Demetrius the Silversmith*, and his *Craftsmen*, cry out in a Fit of religious Anger; *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*: And shall her Temple be despised, and her Magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia, and the World worshippingeth?

Acts xix.  
27, 28.

Mark iv.  
19.

BESIDES, we are informed, in the Parable of the Sower, that *the Cares of this World*, and *the Deceitfulness of Riches*, are apt to choak the Word, and render it unfruitful. It could not but seem a very hard Condition to those, who had set their Hearts upon worldly Wealth; to leave all, and follow *Christ*. We have an Example of

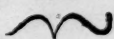
*Darkness rather than Light.*

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of this in the young Man, who was otherwise pretty well disposed, or had made at least fair Professions; but as soon as he heard this, he went away in Sorrow, and Despondency. This hindred him from embracing the *Gospel*, and has tempted others to apostatize from it; which occasioned St. Paul to say, *That the Love of Money was the Root of all Evil, which whilst some have coveted after, they have erred from the Faith, and have pierced themselves through with many Sorrows.*

S E R M.

III.



1 Tim. vi.

10.

AND questionless Riches are still as deceitful as ever, and have the same bewitching Power over Mens Affections. Hence it is, that Men of corrupt Minds, that are destitute of Truth, and blinded by the God of this World, are so easily confirmed in any Error, if it be but gainful: Hence is it, that some can prevail upon themselves, even to dissemble the Truth against their own Knowledge, and to *handle the Word of God itself deceitfully*, to make it more palatable, and pleasing to their Hearers, and thereby the more profitable to themselves; as if Religion were no other indeed, than a Slight, and Craft to

I 3

live



S E R M. live by. Hence is it, that others can  
 III. bring their flexible Consciences to comply,  
 or not comply, with any Thing *Pro* or  
*Con*, as may best serve their temporal Ends;  
 as if Gain, and Godliness were really convertible Terms, and necessarily related to each other.

THESE, and such Practices as these, are too visible in the World, to need the Illustration of particular Examples; and they are a manifest Prejudice to the sacred Truth, and incompatible with that Uncorruptness, Gravity, and Sincerity, which a Christian should always shew, both in his Life, and Doctrine.

*Thirdly*, PRIDE, and vain Glory have always been, and still are a very dangerous Temptation to make Men resist the Truth, and rebel against the bright shining Light of the *Gospel* itself.

AND this was the very Case again, of the *Scribes*, and *Pharisees*; they had all along pass'd for the ablest Expositors of the Law, and were as eminent for their seeming Piety, as they were for their traditional Learning; and for this they receiv'd Honour one of another, and had the Admi-  
 ration

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ration, and Applause of all the People. S E R M.

And therefore when our *Saviour* accused them openly, as the malicious Perverters, as well as the notorious Transgressors of the Law, and rescued its true Force, and Meaning from their false Glosses, and corrupt Traditions; this was doubtless a Provocation to them, to gainsay, and discountenance the Doctrine that he advanced; and accordingly we find that they made Use of their Authority while it lasted, to brow-beat the People, and keep them in Awe by the Dint of their own Example.

III.

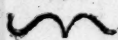
*Have any of the Rulers say they, or the Pharisees believed on him?* John vii. 48.

AND when many of the chief Rulers themselves, were induced to *believe on him*, however because of the Pharisees they confessed him not, (we read *John xii. 42.*) *least they should be put out of the Synagogue*; the Reproach of which they could not bear; For Ver. 43. *they loved the Praise of Men, more than the Praise of God.*

AND it was much the same Impediment, that held back so many of the learned *Heathens*, from taking up the Profession of *Christianity*. For the *Philosophers* were

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most of them vain glorious Persons, who took Pride in Fetches, and Subtleties, and boasted of a greater Depth of Knowledge than other Men; and therefore 'tis no Wonder, if they had no Relish for a plain, simple Doctrine, that had nothing of Shew, or Ostentation in it; 'tis no Wonder, if they thought it Scorn, to be taught any Thing new, by a Parcel of *Idiots*. For that's the best Appellation that they would have vouchsafed the *Apostles* of *Christ*, in Comparison of themselves.

AND this arrogant Conceit, and vain Affectation of Knowledge, is a still a reigning Evil, and a pestilent Enemy to *Christianity*.

FOR when once a Man entertains high Thoughts of his own Abilities, and Improvements; he must, he thinks, in Justice to himself, distinguish himself for a superior *Genius*, and a Man of Notions above the Vulgar: And in order to this, what shall come into his Head sooner, or indeed what can he do easier, than to set up for a *sceptical* Disputer about Religion? This therefore is that he chuses likely, for the Exercise of his Parts. His Sagacity is too great, to be imposed upon by the

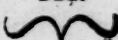
Cant

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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Cant of *Priests*, his Reason is too much exalted, to condescend to be the Handmaid of Faith; and his Faith is too squeamish to believe Things that are unintelligible. He is so used to Demonstrations, if you'll credit him, that he cannot rely upon Testimony, though it be such as is divine: He is so fond of Paradoxes, that he cannot take up with Mysteries; and so dexterous at a Cavil, that he knows not how to acquiesce in the most positive Proof, or solid Reason. It is his Business, and Study rather to find Flaws in Religion, to start Doubts, and Scruples; to be ready at every Turn, with his notable Queries concerning the Author of this, or that Book in Scripture, or Chronological Difficulties, or various Readings; or Passages that carry the Appearance of Contradiction: And with these he pleases himself, and triumphs as much, as if he was able to prove, that there was never any such Man as *Jesus Christ*, and that the *Gospel* History is all but a Bundle of *legendary* Tales.

WHICH later, if he would but professedly attempt, he would affect Singularity to some Purpose; because that is somewhat

SERM.  
III.  




SERM. what more, than any of the antient Enemies of *Christianity* ever pretended to. But such an Attempt, though it would be something more ridiculously singular, yet it would not be much more unreasonable, than to insist upon such frivolous cavilling Objections, as if they were of Weight sufficient to bear down all the *Historical* Evidence, and moral Certainty of the *Gospel*; confirmed as it is, by the infallible Testimony of God himself.

IN the mean Time, this Itch of Vanity, and Affectation is plainly a Distemper of the Mind, that is apt to render it very averse to the Belief of *Evangelical* Truth; and the Captivation of the Understanding, to the Obedience of Faith.

*Fourthly*, AN Indulgence to the Lusts of the Flesh, and a Licentiousness of Manners have been of Old, and always will be a grand Impediment to the Belief of the *Gospel*; and a strong Temptation to *Infidelity*.

FOR certain, this among others, was one Cause of the Backwardness of the *Scribes*, and *Pharisees* to embrace the Faith of *Christ*. For they were such loose Interpreters of the Law, that if the bare Letter  
were

*Darkness rather than Light.*

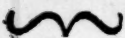
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S E R M.  
III.

were observed, they had little Regard to the chief Intention of it: And we find by our *Saviour's* Correction of their lewd Glosses in the 5<sup>th</sup> of *St. Matthew*, that with all their pretended Strictness, they had left themselves Liberty enough, to indulge most of their irregular Lusts, and Passions. Nay the Truth is, they placed the Stress of Religion so entirely in the legal Purifications, and such like outward Ordinances, that they hardly had any other Notion of any Impurities or Defilements, but what the Ceremonial Law had made so; insensible the mean while (as it should seem by the Application of our *Saviour's* Discourse to them:) *That out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Thefts, false Witness, Blasphemies.* That all these Things come from within, and that these *defile the Man*. This I say, they seem to have been in a great Measure insensible of, and therefore when they heard our *Saviour* preaching up Sincerity of Heart, and Purity, and the Mortification of all inordinate Lusts, and voluntary Self-Denial, these were Austerities that they saw no Necessity for, and could not approve

Mat. xv.  
19.

SERM approve of for Fear of condemning themselves.  
III.



No! doubtless, they rather took Offence at his Person, and Doctrine, who *himself fulfilled all Righteousness*, and required a Degree of it from the meanest of his Followers, much exceeding the boasted Perfection of the *Scribes*, and *Pharisees*. Nay, expected, from the *Scribes*, and *Pharisees* themselves, if they had a Mind to be his *Disciples*, that they should become much more righteous, than they had any Inclination to be.

AND it was much the same Reason in all Probability, that among other Things, obstructed the Conversion of the *Heathens*. For the *Christian* Religion was too holy, and pure, for a People whose very Worship was defiled with Impurities, suitable to the Character, and Example of the false Deities they worshipped; and whose *Philosophy* was not refined enough to make their Morals much purer than their Worship. Hence is it, as I have observed in a former Discourse; that among all the *Heathen Lawgivers*, and *Philosophers* there is no such Thing as a compleat System of  
Morality

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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Morality to be found; none but what has <sup>S E R M.</sup> its considerable Flaws, and Blemishes, <sup>III.</sup> none indeed but what made too large Allowances to the Indulgence of those fleshly Lusts, that most stand in Need of a Restraint; because they were hardest to be restrained. And when Men were so educated, and so addicted; no Doubt, the Severity, and Sanctity of the *Christian* Morals, was a Prejudice not easy to be removed. With them, it was enough to bear down all the Evidence, and Authority of *Christ's* Doctrine, only to say in Contempt; how comes this Man to be more wise, or more righteous than *Solon*, or *Lycurgus*, *Plato*, or *Cicero*?

AND this I reckon is the great Stumbling-Block to our modern Infidels; they cannot go on in their licentious Practices, without breaking loose from all Principles; they therefore turn Revolters from the *Christian* Faith, that they may the more effectually shake off the Yoke of Obedience; and because natural Religion will haunt such *Renegades* in the Tents of *Deism*; they are often driven to the last desperate Refuge, and forlorn Hope of *Atheism*.

No



SERM.

III.

No Wonder then, that the *Gospel* surrounded as it is with Light, should be still hid to those that are stark blind with Bigottry, Obstinacy, Pride, Avarice, or Sensuality.

LET every Man therefore, that finds in himself any the least Propensity to doubting, concerning the Truth of his Religion; let him before he sets up for a Disputer, or *Dogmatizer* on the Side of Irreligion; narrowly search his own Heart, lest his Doubts should arise from some Corruption lurking at the Bottom of it.

PERHAPS he may have observed, that the Principles of Religion are early instilled into Youth by Education, and hence take up an hasty Prejudice, that it is merely *traditional* without any rational Evidence to support it; and then rashly resolve to attack it at all Adventures, without once examining the strength of its Foundation. And not improbably this Prepossession against Religion, may itself be strengthened by an Obstinacy of Temper, and a perverse Pride of Heart, in bearing out with a select few, in Opposition to the Belief, and common Sense of Mankind. Or if the  
mere

mere Affectation of Applause, or the Ambition of being at the Head of a Party, be not the prevailing Motive; the inordinate Love of the World most probably may; the Lust of Power, Wealth, and Honour, for which Men of corrupt Minds will sell the Truth, and not buy it, tho' they part with Faith, and a good Conscience into the Bargain.

SERM.  
III.  
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OR *Lastly*, if the Lusts of the Flesh be predominant, they will be ready to drive him upon the same Precipice. This licentious Liver wants a retiring Place from Conscience, and therefore he commences Libertine in Principle; he turns *Infidel blindfold*, that he may run the wild Career of Pleasure undisturb'd, and see no Danger.

If any one therefore finds himself under Temptation to Unbelief, or feels any Staggerings of Mind that Way, let him search, and probe his Heart to the very Core; lest this evil Disease should be growing apace out of some one, or other of these Depravities of Nature.

FOR let him be assured, that this is most commonly the Case, and it is withal the highest

SERM. highest Aggravation of the Crime, when  
III. any evil Habit, any Impiety, or Immorality proves the Tempter, and Seducer to Infidelity. *For this is the Condemnation (that is, the most aggravating Cause of it) that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds were Evil.* The farther Conſideration of which, I leave for the next Opportunity.





# S E R M O N IV.

The Reason why Men love Dark-  
ness rather than Light.

\*\*\*\*\*

JOHN iii. 19.

*And this is the Condemnation, that  
Light is come into the World, and  
Men loved Darkness rather than  
Light, because their Deeds were  
Evil.*



THE three Points that offer S E R M.  
themselves to our Consi- IV.  
deration in the Text, are; ~~~~~

I. *First*, WHAT that  
Light should be, which is here said, to be

VOL. II.

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come



SERM. *come into the World:* And that I understand to be the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*, which is by *St. Paul* expressly called, *The Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ*; and fully answers that Character, both as it discovers to us some of the noblest, and most important Truths in Religion; and those either altogether unknown, or but imperfectly known before; and also as 'tis proposed to Men's Belief, with the highest, and brightest Degree of Evidence: Both which Particulars have been insisted upon at large.

II. THE *Second Point* is, how it should come to pass, that Men should reject this *Light*, and wilfully shut their Eyes against it. And of this the Text assigns a plain Reason; *they loved Darknes rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil*. And as it is in Mens Power, if they will be so perverse, to resist the clearest Evidence of Truth, and rebel against the Light itself; so there were from the Beginning, and always will be, many vicious Inclinations, and Practices in Men, that will keep them back from heartily embracing the *Gospel*;  
and

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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and receiving the Love of the Truth, that they might be saved. Such as are in particular, those stiff Prejudices, that are apt to arise from the blind Bigottry, and Zeal, that Men commonly have for the Way that they have been train'd up in: The immoderate Love of this World, and an undue Regard of temporal Interest; Pride, and self Conceit, and a vain Affectation of Knowledge more than vulgar: An Indulgence to the Lusts of the Flesh, and Licentiousness of Manners, and the like. For these, and such as these, were the grand Impediments to the Reception, and Progress of the *Gospel* at first, both among *Jews*, and *Gentiles*. They could not bring themselves to comply with a Religion, that was so directly contrary to their inveterate Prejudices, and predominant Passions; they could not endure to behold the *Light*, that expos'd their own Deformities to open View; no! *they loved Darkness rather than Light because their Deeds were Evil*; for which, *Darkness* they hoped might be a convenient Cover, but *Light* they knew would bring Discovery, and Shame along with it.

S E R M.  
IV.  
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SERM. THIS is the true Account, as I endeavour'd to prove in my last Discourse, of the Infidelity, and Impenitence of the *Jews*, and others, that were antiently Enemies to *Christianity*; and the same is the Case ('tis to be fear'd) of those, that are no Friends to it still. It is not that the Evidence for the *Gospel* is too weak, or the Motives to Faith, and Repentance of themselves insufficient; but 'tis because their Lusts are too strong to yield, and their Vices too dear to be parted with.

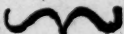
AND this renders their Principles invincible, and incurable: It makes their Hearts gross, and closes their Eyes, that they cannot (nor would they if they could) see, or understand; *lest they should* be converted, and healed. A sad, and very deplorable Estate, that they wilfully reduce themselves to. And

III. WHICH is the *Third* Particular in my Text, that remains now to be considered, *viz.* how just, and heavy, and inevitable the Condemnation of such Men will be. *This* (saith he, who shall finally be their Judge) *is the Condemnation that*  
*Light*

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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*Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil.. And it will appear,*

SERM.  
IV.  


*First, THAT* they who love Darkness rather than *Light*; that is, chuse to continue in Unbelief, and Impenitence, even when they have the best Means of Information, and the strongest Motives to the contrary; it will appear, I say, that all such do incur a *just Condemnation*; because they are guilty of a very plain Neglect of a known Duty. For it is a Duty universally acknowledged by all that own a God, that he is in all things to be believed, and obeyed; that his Will, so far forth as it is reveal'd, ought to be a Rule to Mens Actions, and a Law to their Lives, and that if there be any such Revelation of his Will extant, (as 'tis to be presumed there is) that they who are made acquainted with it, are carefully to consult it, that so they may the better govern themselves by it.

Now these Principles being once admitted; it naturally follows, that there is, and must be a strict Obligation upon all those, to whom the *Gospel* has been, is, or may



SER M. be preach'd, to consider it with all the Attention, Care, and Impartiality that is possible.

IV.

FOR the *Gospel* contains Matters right worthy of God to be reveal'd, and worthy of Men to be receiv'd; such as are those noble, and happy Discoveries it makes concerning God's Nature, and Worship, and his inestimable Love in the Redemption of the World; and concerning the whole Duty of Man, and the Means of performing it; and the Terms of our Salvation, and the Motives to lay hold of it, and make it sure.

AND besides these Matters so truly excellent, and divine in themselves; the *Gospel* is propounded to Men's Belief, with the clearest, and fullest Degree of Evidence, that the Nature of the Thing would bear. It has all the moral Certainty that any *History* can have, more than most other *Histories* have; as being deliver'd to us by Men sufficiently knowing, and most unquestionably faithful; for they seal'd to the Truth of what they related, by their Hearts dearest Blood. And besides, the Facts which they relate, are many of them such,

such, and so circumstantiated, (as the *Re-* SERM.  
*surrection* of our *Saviour* particularly) that IV.  
if false, they could not have been con-  
ceal'd, they must of Necessity have been  
discovered: And since no such Discovery  
was made, 'tis next to impossible they  
should be otherwise than true.

MOREOVER, this *History* is back'd by  
the concurrent Testimony of other *Histo-*  
*ries*, and not contradicted by its most pro-  
fess'd Adversaries.

AND it is still more remarkably con-  
firmed, by the exact Correspondence that  
it bears to the *Old Testament*; which the  
*Jews* believe to be a *Revelation* from God,  
and which is indeed indubitably such.

AND *Lastly*, to crown all, it has the di-  
rect Approbation, and Attestation of Hea-  
ven, by Signs, and Wonders, and diverse  
Miracles, and Gifts of the *Holy Ghost*:  
Which *Jesus* himself appeal'd to, as the  
Credentials of his heavenly Commission;  
and authorized his *Apostles* in like Manner,  
to go, and teach all Nations; when once  
they should be endued, as most miracu-  
lously they were, at the Day of *Pentecost*,  
with Power from on high.

SERM. So that the *Gospel* has all the *Historical*

IV. Evidence that any *History* hath, or can have: Nay, all the most indisputable Marks of a divine *Revelation*, that it is either needful, or fit for any *Revelation* to have, which is what I formerly proved at large.

THE Use I would make of it at present is; that being in all Appearance, so authentically attested as it is; this infers a direct Obligation upon all those, to whom it may have been proposed, to bestow the most diligent, and impartial Consideration upon it.

FOR if it be, as it appears to be, a true *Revelation* of God's Mind, and Will to Mankind, it ought to be heartily embraced, and readily obeyed as such.

AND where it has been once fairly proposed, it plainly obliges to this Belief, and Obedience; and 'tis certain, the Plea of Ignorance can never dissolve that Obligation.

FOR if it be our indispensable Duty, to obey God's Will when we know it; it is without all Peradventure equally our Duty, to attain to that Knowledge by any Means we can; and more especially to  
harken

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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hearken most attentively to his Voice, SERM.  
IV.  
when he vouchsafes to speak unto us by his Son, who left the Bosom of his Father, on Purpose to declare him to the World. And in him *the Grace of God* (as the Apostle expresseth it, 2 Tit. ii.) *That bringeth Salvation to all Men, hath appear'd, teaching us, that denying Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World; looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the great God, and our Lord Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works.*

THIS is the short Sum of *Christianity*, and it is a Lesson very plainly taught, and very easily learn'd, if People be but free from Byas; and willing to be instructed. But yet, Men if they will remain ignorant, may be ignorant notwithstanding. But such their Ignorance does not imply their Innocence, but quite the contrary; because it proceeds from (at least) a heedless Neglect of the obvious, and easy Means of Instruction. And that Neglect, (if there be nothing



SERMON. nothing else in it) is manifestly a Breach  
 IV. of Duty, of that dutiful Deference, and  
 Submission which is always owing to God,  
 and whatsoever has the Stamp of his Authority.

AND this undutiful piece of Negligence, is itself a Crime, even when it stands singly; that justly deserves the Censure of the Text. It is alone a sufficient Cause of Condemnation, that Men should supinely sit down in Ignorance, and prefer *Darkness* to *Light*, when it is held out to them, and they might, for opening their Eyes, both discern the Beauty, and enjoy the Benefit of it. But then

*Secondly*, THIS unreasonable Preference of *Darkness* to *Light*, is not always the mere Effect of this supine Kind of Ignorance. It often takes its Rise from a Concurrence of more malignant Causes, and is attended with higher Aggravations; and in Proportion to the Degree of the Guilt, it is liable to so much the heavier Condemnation.

THIS Difference is sufficiently discernible in the *Jews*, to whom the Word of God was first spoken; and of whom my  
 Text

Text is primarily to be understood. They S E R M.  
put the Word away from them, and judg- IV.  
*ed themselves unworthy of everlasting Life*; Acts xiii.  
as St. Paul told some of them to their Fa- 46.

ces. That is, by the Verdict of their own Actions, they stood in Effect self condemned, for rejecting the *Gospel*; when it was proposed to them with such convincing Evidence. And in this Condemnation they were all involv'd, both the People, and their Rulers; but not all with an equal Share of Guilt. The Ignorance of the People, and their Incredulity occasioned by it, was the less culpable; because they were less capable, 'tis likely, of judging and comparing Things together, of examining into the Credentials of our *Saviour's* Commission; and distinguishing a true Prophet from an Impostor. And it was so much more difficult for them to discern the Truth, thro' so thick a Mist of Ignorance, because they had been bred up in profound Admiration of the *Scribes*, and *Pharisees*; whose every Word, passed for Oracles with them.

BUT then these *blind Leaders of the Blind*, have Abundance more to answer for;

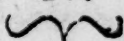
SER M. for; they laboured also under great Ignorance (notwithstanding their high Pretensions to Knowledge) and very strong Prepossessions. But this their Ignorance appears to have been in a great Measure voluntary, and affected; and their Prepossessions were owing not to the Force of Custom, and Education alone, but to the more prevailing Power of their unmortify'd Lusts. They were notoriously covetous, proud, vain-glorious, sensual, and hypocritical (as has been formerly charged, and proved upon them) and therefore *the Wisdom that was from above*, was rejected, and derided by them, although it brought its divine Attestation along with it; even because it was *pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated; full of Mercy, and good Fruits without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy*. This was a Religion too *pure*, and *undefiled*, and too strait laced by a great Deal, for those that were addicted to so many enormous Vices.

THEY had the Opportunity indeed of seeing the Miracles of *Christ* performed, and hearing the Doctrine which he taught, and they were perfectly astonish'd at the one,

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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one, and at all Turns silenced by the o-  
ther; which is a plain Indication that  
there was no want of Evidence to con-  
vince them, that he did both act, and  
speak with an Authority, that they were  
not able with any good Reason, to op-  
pose, or contradict.

S E R M.  
IV.  


BUT then they saw by the same *Light*,  
that the Principles which he advanced,  
were irreconcilable with the Practices, in  
which they allow'd themselves: And there-  
fore with them, the whole Question at last  
turned upon this: Shall we part with our  
beloved Sins, and submit to the Evidence  
of Truth, and be induced to Repentance,  
and be converted? Or shall we still retain  
our Sins, and remain in the Darkness of  
Infidelity, in Spight of Evidence, lest co-  
ming to the Light our Deeds should be re-  
proved? And this in all Probability was  
what made the *Light* so hateful to them,  
and tempted them to reject the *Gospel*, a-  
gainst the Sense, and Conviction of their  
own Minds. I say, against the Sense, and  
Conviction of their own Minds; for even  
so they scrupled not to reject, or which is  
all one, to make void the *Law* itself,  
(which



SERM. (which they professed to hold in the highest Veneration) whenever it thwarted any of their vicious Inclinations. Thus for Instance, did they shamefully distinguish away, one of the most acknowledged Duties in natural, as well as instituted Religion; viz. the Honour, and Maintenance due to their aged Parents, under Pretence of an unnatural Vow, that Tradition it seems had made binding to the contrary.

Now 'tis no Wonder, that those Men who could offer Violence to the Construction, and Obligation of the Law, in a Matter that Nature, and common Reason, and Instinct might have taught them; should also reject the *Gospel* in Despight of the very highest, and brightest Degree of Evidence. 'Tis rather plain, I think, that they that could be guilty of such a staring Absurdity, might do any Thing, though never so absurd; nay, though never so much against their own Judgment, and Conscience.

AND such Men's Infidelity, and Disobedience is certainly attended with the most aggravating Circumstances; and therefore deserves the heavier Sentence. For it apparently

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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SERM.

IV.

parently arises, not from any want of Evidence, or Attention, from Weakness of Understanding, or any other pitiable Infir-  
mity; but from a prodigious Perverseness, and Depravity of the Will, and a total Alienation of the Mind from Truth, and Goodness; and from the true Religion in particular, because it requires Holiness of Life, and Conversation.

AND when this is the true Reason of Men's Enmity to the Faith of *Christ*, 'tis so certain that Ignorance cannot pass for their Excuse, that even their Knowledge will sorely increase their Condemnation. The Truth on't is, such Men know more of Religion, than they are willing to digest, and put in Practice; and they take Shelter in a pretended want of Evidence, or an affected Ignorance, that they may seem with the better Grace to reject, what secretly in their Hearts they dislike. But the Contention chiefly lies, not between the Reason that may be alledged for Religion; but between God's *holy Laws*, and their own ungodly Lusts; the one, or the other of which, they see a plain Necessity of Renouncing; but having been so long subject

SERM. to the Empire of their Lusts, it is the  
 IV. greatest Odds imaginable, but Reason shall  
 be thought too weak an Advocate, and Revelation itself not a competent Judge to decide the Cause in behalf of Religion.

Now this is certainly the most malicious and provoking Opposition to God, and his Authority that can be. It is no less than to give Credit to the wicked Suggestions of *Satan*, and our own wicked Hearts, rather than to his sacred Truth reveal'd in *Scripture*, and sealed with the *Signet* of his *right Hand*. It is to prefer our Follies, and Vanities, and Sins, to all his gracious Promises, and all the Overtures of Mercy, and Favour tender'd to us in the *Gospel*. It is to set him, and his Power, and Vengeance, at open Defiance; and regardless of his Threatnings, to persist in our Rebellion, and Impenitence.

AND doubtless, such a disingenuous, and daring Provocation as this, must be much more culpable, and damnable, than even the *Heathenish Infidelity*; for they shall be answerable only, for transgressing Nature's Law, which they have in common with other Men, but not for rejecting the *Light*  
 of

of the Gospel; which was never imparted to them. And therefore their Punishment shall be but light in Comparison of what *they* shall suffer, who have presumptuously rebelled against both; as may fairly be collected from our Saviour's Denunciation in a Parallel Case. *Woe unto thee Chorazin, Woe unto thee Bethsaida, for if the mighty Works that have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes.*

Mat. xi.  
21.

BUT I say it shall be more tolerable for Tyre, and Sidon at the Day of Judgment, than for you.

A HEAVY Doom for all those that are concerned in it; and that which makes the Terror of it so much the greater, is what I shall now shew in the third Place: Namely,

III. *Thirdly*, THAT this their Condemnation is certain, and inevitable: It is absolutely unavoidable, if they continue obstinate in their Infidelity, and Impenitence; and it is extremely hazardous, whether they will ever be induced to believe, and repent, or no.



SERM. *First*, I say, their Condition is absolutely  
 IV. unavoidable, if they continue obstinate in  
 their Infidelity, and Impenitence.

FOR whilst so they do, they preclude themselves from the very Possibility of Salvation. For as sure as the *Gospel* is true, there is not Salvation in any other; *There is none other Name under Heaven, given among Men, whereby we must be saved, but that of the blessed Jesus; who is the only Way, and the Truth, and the Life. His Blood is the only effectual Propitiation for Sin: His Precepts are the Rule, and his Example the Pattern of Holiness, and Perfection.*

AND there are no other Terms of Pardon, or Reconciliation, of escaping Misery, or arriving at Happiness, but that *Repentance from dead Works, and that Newness of Life, which his Gospel requires.*

AND therefore those who knowingly, and wilfully, nay maliciously, and presumptuously, reject the *Gospel* Terms, which alone are available to Salvation; do, while they continue in that State of Mind, render their Salvation impossible, and their Damnation unavoidable.

FOR

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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FOR if those that have sinned without the S E R M.  
Law, shall perish without the Law; and if IV.  
the Word spoken by Angels was stedfast; and Heb. ii.  
every Transgression, and Disobedience re- 2, &c.  
ceiv'd a just Recompence of Reward; how  
shall we escape, if we neglect so great Sal-  
vation? Which at the first began to be spo-  
ken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us  
by them that heard him; God also bearing  
them Witness; both with Signs, and Won-  
ders, and diverse Miracles, and Gifts of the  
Holy Ghost, according to his own Will.  
How shall we, how can we escape indeed?  
Since the contemptuous Rejection of such  
unparallell'd Grace, and all the powerful  
Evidence with which it comes recom-  
mended to us; as it is the highest Provo-  
cation to God, so it carries its own dread-  
ful Punishment along with it, in depri-  
ving us of the only possible Means of Sal-  
vation.

AND as it is impossible for those that  
remain obstinately incredulous, and impeni-  
tent to be saved, whilst they are so: So

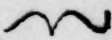
*Secondly,* THEIR Conversion, and Re-  
pentance is highly improbable, and ex-  
tremely hazardous at best. For their Pre-

SER M judices, and Lusts seem to be Proof against

IV. all reasonable Conviction; at least they have  
 hitherto made a notable Resistance to the  
 clearest Evidence, and strongest Motives  
 that can well be, or indeed ought to be  
 offered in such a Case. For what clearer  
 Evidence can be desir'd, than that which  
 resolves itself into the highest moral Cer-  
 tainty, that any *History* can pretend to,  
 confirmed by the most indubitable Marks  
 of a Testimony truly divine, that any Re-  
 velation can produce? And what stronger  
 Motives can be expected, than the Propo-  
 sal of everlasting Happiness, and everlast-  
 ing Misery; the one as the Reward of our  
 Belief, and Obedience, the other as the  
 Punishment of the contrary? This is the  
 Evidence, and these the Motives proper to  
 the *Gospel*.

AND if it were to be supposed, that any  
 Revelation could come better attested, or  
 enforced than this; it must be a Way too  
 forcible I doubt, to consist with that Free-  
 dom of Choice; which alone can recom-  
 mend the virtuous Ingenuity of our Faith,  
 and Obedience.

Now such a Method as this, that would make Converts of us by mere Constraint, were by no Means a proper Method for the Trial of rational Creatures, as God has made us, and therefore may be presumed to treat us.

S E R M.  
IV.  


AND again, were it a Method in any Case practicable, or fit for God to use; yet it can hardly be imagined, that he would see fit to use it in this Case of all others; *i. e.* that he should constrain those against the Bent of their Inclinations to turn Believers, and Penitents, who had first constrain'd him (if I may so say) to betake himself to this last Resort of his Power, by their obstinate Opposition to those ordinary Means, and Motives, which might have been as effectual, if the Men had been ingenuous, and persuasible.

THE Use therefore of such very extraordinary Means (if there be Room for any such) can never be thought to be reserved (by Way of Privilege) for such vile *Miscreants* as these.

So far from it, that the contrary is justly to be fear'd. For besides the natural Tendency that a Perverseness of Temper, and



S E R M. vicious Disposition of Mind, has to debauch  
 IV. the Understanding, and extinguish the Sense  
 of Good, and Evil, and blot out the Evidences of Truth, and Falshood, when 'tis against the Interests of their Lusts to distinguish aright of either of them. I say, besides all this, it is a just Judgment that God threatens, and inflicts in such a Case, to withdraw his illuminating Grace, and leave People under the Possession of their inveterate Prejudices, and that Infatuation of their impetuous Lusts; the Consequence of which is, that even *seeing they cannot see, and hearing they cannot hear*; they become as incapable of Conviction, as once they were averse to it. And a judicial Blindness, and Hardness of Heart, is the present Punishment of their former affected Infidelity, and obstinate Impenitence; and the certain Forerunner of eternal Damnation.

AND thus I have endeavoured to evince;  
*First*, That the preferring Darknes to Light, or the Disbelief of the *Gospel* (take it in its lowest, and most extenuating Circumstances) when it proceeds chiefly from a supine Neglect of the obvious, and easy  
 Means

Means of Information; is a Breach of the S E R M.  
Duty, and Deference which is always due IV.  
to God, and his Authority; and on that

very Account incurs just Condemnation. And then *Secondly*, That this Condemnation will be so much the sorer, and heavier, according as it is loaded with greater, and more heinous Aggravations; as when Men's Unbelief, and Disobedience to the *Gospel* arises, not from Want of Attention, or Weakness of Understanding, or any pitiable Infirmary; but from a prodigious Depravity of their Wills, and an excessive Fondness for their Lusts, and a malicious Hatred to the Truth, for no other Reason, but because it will not soothe them in their Sins. And *Thirdly*, To make People sensible of the extreme Danger of the Sin of Infidelity, especially when attended with so much Malignity; I have shewn, that it renders their Condemnation absolutely unavoidable, if they persist in it; because it deprives them of the only possible Means of Salvation, and at the same Time, that it renders their Conversion too, very improbable, and more than ordinarily hazardous; both because of the fatal

SERM. Tendency that Vice has to darken Men's

IV.

Understandings, and to corrupt their very Consciences; and also because of the Provocation that is given to the divine Justice to turn their voluntary Sin, into their necessary Punishment; and thereby conclude them finally, under an Incapacity of Conversion, Repentance, or Pardon.

THIS is the short Sum of what has been said upon this Argument; and now I shall put an End to this whole Discourse, by a serious Application by way of Expostulation, and Caution to those, who live under the *Gospel Meridian*, and in a *Christian Country*, and yet are no hearty *Profelites* to *Christianity*, at least *sceptical* Disputers against it.

AND of these I demand in the first Place, that they would produce their Cause, and bring forth the strong Reasons that they have in Reserve, against the *Christian Religion*; that we may see whether they are indeed strong enough, to baffle all the positive, and powerful Evidence, that is alledged for it.

WHAT have they then that is solid, and substantial to offer? Any Thing that will

will overthrow the Credit of the *Gospel* History? Any Thing that will convict the Miracles of *Christ*, and his *Apostles* of Imposture? Or if they must be admitted for true Miracles, have they any Thing to prove, that they are no infallible Signs of God's Attestation, and Approbation? No! they are able to make but very feeble Efforts of this Kind, if any at all; the very Confession of *Jews*, and *Heathens*, our honest Adversaries of Old, would shame them out of that. Their Resort therefore is to small Doubts, Cavils, and Exceptions, of which they make mighty Difficulties. Not such Difficulties neither, but what may be fairly accounted for. And yet if they were much greater than they are, the general Proof of the *Christian* Religion stands unanswer'd, and unanswerable: And therefore particular Difficulties cannot be thought to affect the main Cause, nor ought they to stagger any reasonable Man's Belief.

YES, it may be they will say; the Proof might be tolerably good at first, and sufficiently convincing to those that were so happy to be Ear, and Eye-witnesses to the Doctrine, and Miracles of *Christ*, and his Apostles;



SERMON. Apostles; but with us the Case is different; and how different I pray? They had the Evidence of Sense indeed, which we have not; but we also have some Degrees of Evidence which they could not have. We have undoubted Records of *History*, which make a faithful Report to us, of those Miracles which they saw, nay of many more Miracles than any one Man for his own Share could have the Opportunity of seeing; nay we have seen, or heard of the Accomplishment of some remarkable Predictions, which they lived not to see, or hear of.

AND in this Respect our *historical* Evidence is fuller, though not so immediate as that which they had from their Senses.

AND after all; Sense is no more an infallible Means of Information, than authentic *History*: It was as possible (if we must needs go to the utmost Stretch of Things) for them that lived in our Saviour's, and his *Apostle's* Days, to be deceiv'd by some *magical Illusion* in what they took to be the great Objects of our Senses, as it is for us at this Distance of Time,

Time, to be imposed upon by a false *History* that comes recommended to us, with all the highest Circumstances of Credibility. SERM.  
IV.

THE Short on't is, the Certainty, both of *their* Information from Sense, and *ours* from *History*, must rest at last upon God's Veracity, and Goodness. And his Veracity, and Goodness are in both Cases, alike concern'd not to suffer an Imposture to pass upon Mankind, in a Matter of such vast Importance.

IN this Respect therefore, both we, and they are fairly upon the Level. For we are equally secured against Deception, if we make a right Use of such Means as we have, and are willing to acquiesce in such Motives of Assent, as are sufficient to determine any rational Man.

AND for those that are so nice, and scrupulous in believing, that they cannot depend upon the Faith of *sacred History*, though never so authentically attested; they must give us leave to doubt in our Turns (absurd as it may seem) whether they would credit their own Eyes, and and Ears, even if a new Scene of *Miracles* should be presented before them, and a  
Messenger

SERMON. Messenger from Heaven should come to

IV. instruct. It would be a Gratification I confess, very unreasonable for them to expect, or God to grant; but supposing such a Thing, if they had a Mind to indulge themselves in endless Suspicions, against all Sense, and Reason; they might, and in all Probability, if it were for the Interest of their darling Lusts, so they would.

FOR this is the grand Secret of Infidelity at last, and herein lies the *capital* Strength of the Cause, that when Mens Lusts are at Enmity with Religion, their Reason is easily bribed over to be on that Side, and in such a Case, the weakest of Arguments back'd with strong Inclinations, will be stout enough not to surrender to the utmost Force of Conviction. Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed as is due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, henceforth, and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON



# SERMON V.

A Discourse against Infidelity.



HEB. iii. 12.

*Take heed, Brethren, lest here be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God.*



HIS Admonition is directed <sup>SERM.</sup>  
by the *Apostle* to the converted <sup>V.</sup>  
*Jews*, who as yet possibly  
were but weak, and wavering  
in the Faith, or might be in Danger  
of



SERM. of fainting, and falling from it under  
 V. the Heat, and Fury of that Persecution,  
 which they had already felt, and had  
 but too much cause still to fear, from  
 their obdurate, and enraged Brethren.

AND the Admonition is very aptly enforced, and pressed Home upon them, from the unhappy Example of their Forefathers, who had been a *stubborn, and rebellious Generation*, even from the Time of *Moses*. The particular Instances of whose repeated Backslidings, and Provocations, are occasionally inserted in the Books of *Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*, and they are summarily recounted, and laid together in one View, in the 78<sup>th</sup>, and 106<sup>th</sup> *Psalms*. Where their deserved Character appears to be, *That their Spirit was not stedfast with God, that they forgat his Works, and his Wonders, that he had shewed them, that they believed not in God, and trusted not in his Salvation; that they provoked him, and grieved him; yea, turned back, and tempted him, and limited the holy one of Israel.* In short, after all the Signs, and Miracles that had been wrought among them, (which were so many astonishing  
 Proofs

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Proofs of God's over-ruling Power, and SERM.  
special Providence) they still wanted an V.  
Heart to perceive, and Eyes to see, and  
Ears to hear. Such was their Obstinacy,  
and *Infidelity*, that they would not be per-  
suaded to confide in his Promises, or rely  
upon his Sufficiency, without fresh Expe-  
riments of his Omnipotence; as often as  
in their perverse, and petulant Humour,  
they made bold to call for them. Nay,  
so desperate was their Folly, that they had  
once thought of withdrawing themselves  
from God's Protection, to whose *out-  
stretched Arm*, they owed their Delive-  
rance, and returning back into *Egypt*:  
And at another Time so prodigious was  
their Stupidity, that they set up an Idol  
of their own making, to rival God, and  
rob him of his Glory; they *worshipped a* Exod.  
xxxii. 4.  
*molten Calf fashion'd out of their own Ear-  
rings*, and said, *These be thy Gods, O Is-  
rael, which brought thee up out of the Land  
of Egypt.*

Now all these *Things* happen'd unto them  
for *Ensamples*; and so the *Psalmist* applies Pf. xc.  
them by way of Caution to the People of  
his Time: And from him they are here  
borrow'd

SERMON borrow'd by the *Apostle*, and seasonably  
 V. urg'd upon some of their Descendents, now  
 become Converts to the Faith of *Christ*.

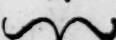
Ver. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. *Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, to Day if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts, as in the Provocation, in the Day of Temptation in the Wilderness: When your Fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my Works forty Years. Where I was grieved with that Generation, and said, They do alway err in their Heart, and they have not known my Ways; so I swear in my Wrath, they shall not enter into my Rest.*

AND then follows the Application of the Text: *Take heed Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God.. And the Apostle pursues this Argument throughout this, and a good Part of the next Chapter, as thinking it of peculiar Use, and Force, to prevent these new Converts from falling from their Stedfastness, and forfeiting the blessed Privileges of their Christian Profession: And in order to keep their Hope erect, and their Caution awake, he repeats the Admonition, and endeavours to leave it, fix'd in their Minds, Ver. 11.*  
 of

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of the Chapter ensuing: *Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any Man fall after the same Example of Unbelief;* plainly implying, that through Constancy, and Perseverance, they might expect to obtain, if not a Respite from their present Troubles, yet a final Rest from all their Labours, in that Kingdom which cannot be moved; the Type of which, the earthly Canaan, their Fathers forfeited, through their incurable *Infidelity*; which must needs therefore be an Example fatal to be imitated.

S E R M.  
V.  


HAVING given you this general Light into the Text, and Context, I shall hence raise two Observations, and such as may be useful to modern *Christians*, to whom I could wish the Words before us were less applicable than they really are.

TAKE heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God.

WHERE 'tis obvious to observe these two Things:

I. *First*, THE Property of *Infidelity*, or Unbelief, whereby it is describ'd, and distinguished;

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stinguish'd;



SERM. distinguish'd; it consisteth in *departing from*  
 V. *the living God*; it is in Effect, an Apostasy,  
 or Defection from him.

II. *Secondly*, THE true Rise, and Birth of it; it naturally proceeds from an *evil Heart*; from some vicious Habit wilfully cherish'd, and indulg'd.

I SHALL spend some Thoughts upon each of these Heads:

I. THE *First* Thing I would offer to your Observation is the Property, by which *Infidelity*, or *Unbelief* is here describ'd, and distinguish'd: It consisteth, according to our *Apostle*, in *departing from the living God*; it is, in Effect, an Apostasy, or Defection from him.

INCREDULITY, in the general Notion, is a Temper of Mind, that renders Men averse to yield their Assent to those Truths, for which there is proper, and sufficient Evidence.

INFIDELITY implies a particular Averseness to assent to those Truths which are proposed to our Belief, upon *divine* Testimony, or some other Manifestation of the  
 Godhead,

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Godhead, equivalent thereunto. And

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THIS *Infidelity* may be consider'd in a twofold Respect, either as rejecting sacred, and revealed Truths, upon their first Proposal; or else renouncing them, after they have been deliberately receiv'd, and embrac'd. In the former Case, the Sublimity of the Truths themselves, or their Contrariety to prevailing Opinion, and Practice, may beget such a sudden, and violent Prejudice against them, as is likely to preclude all fair Examination. And this may in some small Degree extenuate, tho' it is very far from excusing the Want of due Attention, and Regard to a divine Testimony. In the latter Case, Prejudice is supposed to have been once remov'd, Reason enlightned, and the Judgment to have surrender'd upon full Conviction; and to renounce the Belief of any Thing so grounded, is industriously to stifle an Evidence too clear, and strong to be resisted, it is to rebel against the Light, it is to deny the Truth, and Faith of God, and to deny the Author, and Revealer of it too, and make him the Liar.

M 2

AND

SERM.

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(which are the Circumstances under which the *Apostle* consider'd it) is no better than *Apostasy*; it is to depart from the living God, and to cast him off, as if he were not worthy to be believed, or trusted.

THE Example of the antient *Jews*, (which is recorded for a Warning to those of their Posterity, who became *Christians*, and to all *Christians* after them) will illustrate this Point very clearly.

THEY were conducted out of *Egypt* by a mighty Train of Wonders; which were a most glorious Testimony of the divine Presence, and Power, and Providence all engag'd in their Defence; and were abundantly sufficient to support them under the Belief, and Hope of seeing God's Promises, and their own Deliverance fully completed. And yet God complains of them, that they tempted, and proved him, and saw his Works forty Years. Their reiterated Experience could not but convince them, that they must needs be safe under the Guardianship of the Almighty; and when the Sense of this was strong, and lively upon their Minds, then believed they his

*Words,*

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*Words, and sang his Praise. But they soon* SERM.  
*forgat his Works, and waited not for his* V.  
*Counsel.* They soon grew as distrustful,  
and impatient, as if they had seen none  
of the Acts of his Might, none of the In-  
stances of his Goodness, or Truth. The  
Remembrance of the last Miracle was lost  
in the Noise of the next Murmur. Every  
new Difficulty appear'd to them insupe-  
rable; and so far were they from expect-  
ing any Aid from God, that through mere  
Despair, they were for turning their Backs  
upon him, and giving themselves up a-  
gain into Bondage. Thus did their Disbe-  
lief of the divine Veracity, and Power,  
whereof they had so many convincing  
Proofs, tempt them *to depart from the liv-*  
*ing God.* And depart from him they  
actually did, and in the most scandalous  
Manner, when they *went a whoring after*  
*their own Inventions,* and set up a lifeless  
Image for their Deliverer.

AND in like Manner, among us *Chri-*  
*stians,* to renounce the Belief of any Thing  
that has the undoubted Attestation of Mi-  
racles, is to renounce the divine Attributes,  
which is renouncing the Godhead; it is



SERM. to deny that God is the God of Truth,  
 V. which is denying him to be the true God;  
 and therefore a plain Defection from him,  
 and a rebellious Opposition to him.

To exemplify this yet farther. The *Gospel* is a divine Revelation, most remarkably attested by a Series of *Miracles*, and *Prophecies*, lending mutual Light, and Strength to each other: And this is Evidence so very clear, and equally so to all Capacities, that no considering Man, who has had the early Advantages of a *Christian* Education, can entertain any reasonable Doubt of it. Now it is confessed there are Mysteries contain'd in this *Gospel*, too difficult to be comprehended; and there have been Dangers sometimes attending the Profession of it very terrible to be encounter'd. But the Difficulty of comprehending, or the Danger of professing revealed Truths, neither alters, nor weakens the Evidence, on which they are built. The *Miracles*, and *Prophecies* by which the *Gospel* is confirm'd, are Facts that stand uncontested. And Mysteries are no harder to be conceiv'd than Miracles, nor is any Power of Man, a Match for Omnipotence.

To

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To insist therefore on more Evidence, SERM.  
more Assurance for the Belief of the Go- V.  
*spel*, than what we already have, is pre-  
sumptuously to tempt God, as did the *Is-*  
*raelites* of old: But to relapse from *Chri-*  
*stianity* to *Infidelity*, is to revolt from, and  
usurp over him; it is to cry down God,  
and his infallible *Revelation*, and set up  
the Idol of our own Reason to give out  
Oracles; it is to set aside the divine Wis-  
dom, and Power, as incompetent Witnes-  
ses of Truth; and to constitute our own  
Folly, and Weakness, the supreme Judges  
of it. Which is the most daring Piece of  
Defiance against the most High, that *a-*  
*postate Creatures* can well be guilty of.

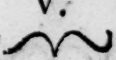
BUT to bring this Instance Home to the  
Text, from whence it ariseth. The su-  
pereminent Dignity of our *Saviour's* Per-  
son, not only as a *Prophet* from God, but  
as his eternal Son (upon which alone the  
Efficacy of his Priesthood depends.) I say,  
this among other mysterious Truths, is ex-  
pressly reveal'd to us in diverse Places of  
the *New Testament*. And this Argument  
is particularly handled by *St. Paul*, and  
carried into its just Consequences, in this

SERM. Epistle to the *Hebrews*: He lays his Foundation in the first Chapter, where *Christ* is not only preferr'd before the whole angelical Order, but exalted above the Rank of any created Being. He is styl'd *the Son of God, the Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person*: The Acts of Omnipotence, and the incommunicable Attributes of the Godhead are ascrib'd to him; the Creation, and Conservation of the World, (and that by the mere *Word* of his Power) supreme Dominion, Eternity of Existence, and Immutability. And, the *Apostle* having thus cloath'd him, if I may so speak, with the Robes of divine Majesty, having thus secur'd the Honour, and Authority of his Mission, and Office, exhorts his Brethren in the 1<sup>t</sup> Verse of the 3<sup>d</sup> Chapter to *consider him as the Apostle, and High-Priest of their Profession*. And the Regard, and Veneration that is due to him as such, he urges as the proper Motive to Stedfastness, and Perseverance. *Seeing then* (says he) *that we have a great High-Priest, that is passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our Profession*. And the Admonition of the Text is resolv'd into the same

Chap. iv.  
14.

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same Reason, *Take Heed, Brethren, lest there* S E R M.  
*be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief,* V.  
*in departing from the living God, and de-* 

spoiling him of his just Honours. And since the Divinity of *Christ* is here, and elsewhere so solemnly asserted, since the Revelation is plain, though the Mystery it self be inexplicable; for those who are acquainted with Revelation, to attack this Mystery with Quirks, and Subtleties, or to reject it as incredible, is *to depart from the living God, both Father, and Son: For as* Jo. v. 26.  
*the Father hath Life in himself, so hath he given to the Son, to have Life in himself.*

It is to dispute the Mastery with the Father in the Depths of his own Wisdom, even about the Manner of his Existence, and the Communication of his divine Essence: It is to dispute the very Godhead with the Son, pertinaciously maintaining it to be only titular, and not real; though the same St. *John* is express in asserting, that he is the *true God, and eternal Life.*

*And as he that believeth not God, hath made* I Jo. v. 10.  
*him a Liar, because he believeth not the Record that God gave of his Son. So whosoever de-* I John ii.  
*nieth the Son, the same hath not the Father* 22, 23.

(for



SERM. (for he and the Father are one): And he is  
 V. *Antichrist, who denieth the Father, and the*  
 Son. So that that pretended *Christian* (or  
 let him call himself as he pleases) who  
 reads the *Gospel*, and yet is an Unbeliever  
 in the fundamental Point of *Christ's* Divi-  
 nity; has desperately plunged *himself* into  
 the very Gulph of *Antichristian Apostasy*,  
 which leads, it may justly be fear'd, to  
 irrecoverable Perdition.

Heb. vi.  
 4, 5, 6.

AT least dreadful, very dreadful (to  
 whomsoever it belongs) is the Sound of these  
 Words: *It is impossible for those who were*  
*once enlightned, and have tasted of the hea-*  
*venly Gift, and were made Partakers of the*  
*Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word*  
*of God, and Powers of the World to come;*  
*if they shall fall away, to renew them again*  
*unto Repentance; seeing they crucify to them-*  
*selves the Son of God afresh, and put him*  
*to an open Shame.*

IF the falling away, against which all  
 this is denounc'd, be to be understood (as  
 most probably it is) of a total Abnegation,  
 and malicious Rejection of the *Gospel*, and  
 its whole Contents, as fabulous and false;  
 would it not make one tremble for the  
 modern

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V.

modern *Deists*, to whose Character it answers so exactly? For they are *Renegades* from *Christianity*; and they do treat the Author of the blessed *Gospel*, as if he were no better than an Impostor, and deserv'd the ignominious Death which he voluntarily underwent, which some of them have been audacious enough to express. And although those *Heretics* who deny the Divinity of *Christ*; do not withal reject the whole *Gospel*, nor directly call in Question its Authority; yet they maim it in a principal Part, they take off the great Hinge, upon which *Christian* Œconomy chiefly turns, and whether they will stop here, or what they may next renounce, Nobody can undertake for them, nor they for themselves. And it cannot chuse but give Pain to any compassionate Soul, to see Men so near the Brink of a desperate Precipice.

AND howsoever we are to understand what is said of those that fall away; that it is impossible to renew them again unto Repentance; whether this be made impossible by some fix'd Decree of God, or whether it only becomes so in the Order of  
of

SERMON of Things as by him appointed, because  
 V. there are no Means or Helps for their  
 Recovery, which they have not already  
 maliciously defeated, and for such *Mis-*  
*creants* no extraordinary Remedy can be  
 expected: I say, however this may be, it  
 is remarkably true, in Fact, that of those  
 who are Apostates from the *Christian* Faith,  
 or even the bold, and subtle *Heretics*, there  
 are exceeding few, who have ever been  
 reclaim'd from their pernicious Errors, or  
 brought to give Glory to God, and Satis-  
 faction to his Church, by a sincere Con-  
 fession, and Retraction of them. They  
 are rather observ'd for the most Part to  
 proceed, persist, and conclude *like Men of*  
*corrupt Minds, reprobate concerning the*  
*Faith*; as if they were not only vitiated in  
 Judgment, but even render'd incapable of  
 judging aright, or coming to any Acknow-  
 ledgment of divine Truth, as if their Per-  
 tinaciousness were really invincible, and  
 their Blindness incurable.

WELL therefore may any *Christian* Heart  
 bleed for those who are so spiritually be-  
 numm'd, that they have no Sense of their  
 Sin, no Concern for themselves.

AND

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AND let us take Heed, Brethren, as we love our own Souls, lest there be in any of us an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God, for Fear it should never more be in our Power to return to him again.

AND the Lord preserve all honest Minds from this most dangerous Snare of the Devil. *Amen.*

*Now to God the Father, God the Son,  
and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*



SERMON







# SERMON VI.

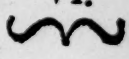
A Discourse against Infidelity.



HEB. iii. 12.

*Take heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God.*



FROM these Words, when I SERM.  
enter'd upon them, I offer'd VI.  
these two Things to your Ob-  
servation. 

I. First,

SERM.

VI.

I. *First*, THE Property by which *Infidelity* is here describ'd, and distinguish'd: It consisteth ἐν τῇ ἀποστασί ἀπὸ θεῶ ζώντος, in departing from the living God; it is, in Effect, a sort of *Apostasy*, or Defection from him.

II. *Secondly*, THE true Rise, and Birth of it: It naturally proceedeth from an evil Heart; from some vitious Habits wilfully cherish'd, or indulg'd.

I. THE *First* Point I have already discours'd on at large, and have shewn, that *Infidelity*, which implies an Aversion to the Belief of such Things as are evidenced by divine Testimony, or some other Manifestation of the Deity thereunto equivalent, is no better than a Defection from God; especially in those Circumstances under which the Apostle here considers it. That is to say, when Men are tempted to renounce the Belief of Those Things which upon due Conviction, they had once receiv'd as true, and are as plainly attested so to be by God himself.

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THIS was notoriously the Case of the *Israelites* of old; from whose unhappy Example the Admonition of the Text takes its Rise, and Force. The mighty, and marvellous Acts of the Lord, in their first Deliverance out of *Egypt*, and the Train of Wonders that still waited on them, were, and must be convincing Demonstrations to them, of the Sufficiency of God's Providence, and the Security of his Promises; and they might, and ought to have render'd their Faith, and Affiance in him unmoveable, as his Counsels were immutable. But their many Murmurings, and Mutinies under the Safeguard of the Almighty, were so many Declarations on their Part, that they did not think him worthy to be believ'd, or relied on; and this, notwithstanding the most sensible Experience to the contrary. And this puts them upon the desperate Project of actual Desertion, even of returning into *Egypt*, as if it had been more eligible to be in the Hands of their cruel Oppressors, than of such a Protector. Nay, to make their Rebellion, as provoking as possible, they revolted from the living God, to a lifeless Image of

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their



S E R M. their own making; and said, with equal  
 VI. Stupidity, and Ingratitude, *These be thy*  
*Gods; O Israel, which brought thee up out*  
*of the Land of Egypt.* And thus behold  
 their *Unbelief* completed in *Apostasy*.

AND parallel to this, in the main Strokes  
 of Resemblance, is the Case of the modern  
*Deists*, who, from *Christians* by Education,  
 commence *Infidels* upon deliberate Thought.  
 Not that *Christianity* wants its proper,  
 and sufficient Evidence: It is most remar-  
 kably attested to be a Revelation from  
 God, by a Series of *Prophecies*, and *Mira-*  
*cles*, lending mutual Light, and Strength  
 to each other; and this is Evidence that  
 stands full in the View, of all that have  
 been bred among *Christians*, and employ-  
 ed any the least Thought upon the Sub-  
 ject: And it is Evidence most admirably  
 well fitted, for the Conviction of all sober,  
 and ingenuous Minds: Nay, 'tis such E-  
 vidence, as they who are most disingenuous  
 cannot well except against, they cannot  
 say wherein it is defective; they cannot  
 insist upon any higher, or stronger Degree  
 of Evidence, but what would offer Vio-  
 lence to their rational Faculties, and force  
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them to believe whether they will or no. SERM.  
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Since then the *Gospel Revelation* is so plainly seal'd with the Signet of God's right Hand, those *Miscreants*, who can find in their Hearts to renounce the Belief of it, do in Effect declare, that God is not to be believ'd upon his most solemn Word, and Testimony, that even Omniscience, and Omnipotence in Conjunction are no competent Witnesses of Truth, but they themselves the supreme Judges of it: And thus, in attacking *Christianity*, they are found to fight against God, in revolting from it, they *apostatize* from him, and set up for themselves.

AND those perverse *Heretics* are in too great a Proportion, Partakers of the same Guilt; who, though they do not reject the *Gospel*, or question its divine Authority, yet cannot digest those mysterious, and most important Truths, upon which the whole *Œconomy* mainly depends. For Instance; although those Titles, Honours, Attributes, and Works, which are properly divine, be directly ascrib'd to the *Holy Jesus*, in diverse Places of the *New Testament*; yet his Divinity is disown'd, and rejected,

SER M: as a Thing incredible, even by some of  
 VI. those who embrace this very *Gospel*. And  
 why so? Not because the Revelation in  
 this Point is not express enough (for no  
 Words can well be more so) but because  
 the Mystery reveal'd, is too sublime to be  
 comprehended. And what is this, but to  
 admit the Authority of the *Gospel*, on Pur-  
 pose as it were, to make it insignificant?  
 What but to render the Testimony of God,  
 of no Force, wherever Reason finds her-  
 self destitute of other Proof, or wants e-  
 ven the Capacity of conceiving? What's  
 that indeed, but to set up the narrow In-  
 tellect of Man, for the universal Standard  
 of Truth, and to *make God a Liar*, in not  
 believing the Record he hath given of his  
 Son, as not squaring with the Standard?  
 Which is *to depart from the living God*,  
 both Father, and Son: For they are one,  
 and therefore, according to St. *John*, *who-*  
*soever denieth the Son, the same hath not*  
*the Father; and he is Antichrist who deni-*  
*eth the Father, and the Son, i. e.* he stands  
 in direct Opposition to both, who goes a-  
 bout by his own Reasoning, to dissolve that  
 inseparable Relation, and Union between  
 them,

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them, which Revelation most expressly as-  
serts. SERM.  
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AND by these Examples, I endeavour'd to explain the Nature, and Property of *Unbelief*, which, as it is describ'd in the Text, is a Sort of *Apostasy*, or Defection from God.

II. *Secondly*, THE next Thing I would entreat you to observe, is the true Rise, and Birth of *Infidelity*, or *Unbelief*: It naturally proceedeth *from an evil Heart*, from some vitious Habit wilfully cherish'd, and indulg'd.

THIS the Nature of the Thing, as already set forth, might be sufficient to evince; but the Text plainly implies as much in calling it *an evil Heart of Unbelief*; and the same is farther confirmed by other Texts of Scripture, and Reasons grounded thereupon.

FAITH, according to St. *John*, is Matter <sup>1 John iii.</sup> of positive Precept, and Duty: *This is his* <sup>23.</sup> *Commandment, that we should believe on the* <sup>John vi.</sup> *Name of his Son Jesus Christ: And this is* <sup>29.</sup> *the Work of God, that ye believe on him, whom he hath sent.* And therefore *In-*



SERM *fidelity* the Opposite to Faith, is a Breach  
 VI. of Duty, and the Transgression of a known  
 Law, which is the very Formality of Sin.  
 And were there no other ill Ingredient in  
 it, it is certainly a culpable Perverseness of  
 the Will in any one Point, to dispute, or  
 despise the Authority of our supreme Law-  
 giver.

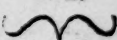
John xvi. 3. AND as our Saviour declares, that *the*  
*World should be reprov'd, (or convinced) of*  
*Sin, because they believed not on him, so*  
*does he pronounce it to be a Sin, void of*  
 John xv. 22. *all Pretext, or Colour; If I had not come,*  
*and spoken unto them, they had not had Sin;*  
*but now they have no Cloak for their Sin.*  
 And the *Infidelity of Apostatizing Christians*  
 cannot be less, it may justly be thought  
 much more, inexcusable, than that of the  
*unbelieving Jews.*

AND as *Unbelief* is undeniably convicted  
 of Guilt in the *Scripture*; so is it as pe-  
 remptorily sentenc'd to Punishment. He  
 Mark xvi. 16. *that believeth not, shall be damned, saith*  
 Rev. xxi. 8. *he who is Judge of all: And the Fearful,*  
*and Unbelieving have their Part allotted in*  
*the Lake which burneth with Fire, and*  
*Brimstone.*

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THE Arraignment therefore, and Con-  
demnation of *Unbelief* in holy Writ, would  
sufficiently demonstrate it to be the Off-  
spring of a wicked Heart, even though we  
could not so readily assign the particular  
Wickedness that is so apt to proceed from  
Evil to Evil, 'till it terminate in this,  
which is the greatest of all others.

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BUT it is very easy to point out the Causes, that are naturally productive of it. Indeed any corrupt Inclination, or vitious Habit wilfully cherished, and indulged, must have a fatal Tendency this Way. For the *Gospel* is a perfect System of all Godliness, and Virtue: And the Belief of it strictly binds the Conscience, to the Practice of every moral Duty, without Reservation, or Dispensation. Faith therefore, and a good Conscience must, and may easily be held together; but put away the latter, and the Shipwreck of the former is greatly endanger'd. The habitual Indulgence of any one single Vice, is enough to move it from its Anchor: And the stronger the vitious Habit is, the more impatient will it be to break those Bands asunder, and

S E R M cast them away thro' *Unbelief*, by which  
 VI. it is bound to the Yoke of Obedience.

BUT some particular Vices there are, more apt than others to give a wrong By-  
 as, both to the Understanding, and the Will, and to drive, or draw Men into *Infidelity*. In the foremost Rank of which, we may well place Sensuality; for when Men give themselves up to an impure, and dissolute Course of Living; as the Corruptness of their Affections vitiate their Judgments, and make them less capable of discerning the Evidence of divine Truth; so does the Licentiousness of their Lives strongly tempt them to disbelieve it, and drives them to *Infidelity* for mere Refuge. For whilst they doe retain the Belief of the *Gospel*, the severe Injunctions, and terrible Threatnings therein contain'd, must needs be a frequent Check to them in their irregular Pursuits, and a bitter Allay to all the Sweets of Voluptuousness. And in order to be a little at Ease, or to have any true Relish of their beloved Enjoyments, their only Recourse is to the strong Opiate of *Unbelief*; that may lull their Con-  
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sciences asleep, and render them quite insensible. And when the Matter is once drawing towards this Issue; the Interest of their Lusts is pretty sure to overpower both Reason, and Revelation, and make them *Infidels* in Spite of both. And this, 'tis to be feared, is the deplorable Case of most of those, who bid open Defiance to Religion, who take the Chair of Profession in *Infidelity*, and *compass Sea and Land to make their Profelytes*.

BUT there are other evil Habits perhaps not so much suspected, or so ill thought of, as Sensuality, that do give the Inclination an unhappy Bent towards *Unbelief*. Such in particular is Ambition, and Vain-Glory, the Operation of which was very powerful in the *Jews* of old, and an effectual Bar we find to their Belief in the *Messiah*. So says he, who knew what was in Man; *How can ye believe which receive Honour one from another, and seek not the Honour that cometh from God only?* Nay, so strong was this Enchantment, that even those who were in Reason convinced, could not overcome the Shame of confessing it: For *amongst the chief Rulers many believed*

on



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SERM. on him, (as we read *John xii. 42, 43.*) But

VI. *they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue; for they loved the Praise of Men, more than the Praise of God.* And the high Pretence to more than ordinary Knowledge, as well as Authority in the great ones; was still laid in the Way for a *stumbling Block* to the more ingenuous; *Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on him?* (Say they) *But this People who knoweth not the Law are cursed.* These learned *Rabbi's* had affected, and acquired to themselves the Reputation of being nicely skilled in the Law, to the least Punctilio of it: Nay, upon this they erected an uncontrollable Authority over the People; and it was beneath Authority so established, to stoop to Instruction, or look out for farther Light; it was beneath such admir'd Teachers, to sit down in the Form of Learners, and to learn of one so *meek and lowly*, and in their Eyes so mean, and contemptible. And being too proud of Heart to acknowledge their own Errors, they resolve to upbraid those of Ignorance, who were of a more docible Disposition, than themselves. They took away the Key  
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of Knowledge, and they entred not in SERM.  
themselves, and them that were entring in, VI.  
they hindred. Thus did their Affectation  
of Rule, and Authority, founded on the  
Pretence of deep Knowledge, at once make  
them incurably blind in Unbelief; and  
lead their implicate Followers blindfold  
into the same Ditch.

AND this proud, vain-glorious Humour,  
though it may operate somewhat different-  
ly; hath the same fatal Influence in ob-  
structing, undermining, and corrupting the  
Faith of *Christ*, even to this Day. There  
is a peculiar Vanity that sticks close to  
some Men, and makes them affect to be  
reputed cautious Enquirers after Truth,  
sagacious Discoverers, and profound Reaso-  
ners; which having once assumed to them-  
selves, they fail not to set up for *Dictators*  
to others, especially in those Enquiries which  
concern Religion. And here you may be  
sure, it is below such exalted Wits to sit  
down at the Feet of *Jesus*, speaking to  
them in his holy *Gospel*, or by his *Embas-*  
*sadors*; it is doubtless below their inquisi-  
tive Genius, to take up with Evidence  
that lies level to the meanest Capacity, or  
to

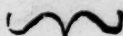
SERM. to embrace any Thing for Truth, that they  
VI. have not critically examined, and cannot  
~~~~~ thoroughly comprehend. It is more glorious they think, to lead the Way through Thickets, and over Mountains, than to follow the beaten Track, where there is nothing to be met with but common Notions, and traditionary Opinions; nothing worthy the Pursuit of such noble Understandings. Out of this dull Road therefore they are resolved to break, though it be to throw themselves into an intricate Maze of Doubts, and endless Uncertainties; clearing up the Difficulties of Religion, as they go, by weakning the Authority, or extinguishing the Sense of it; 'till at length, they are miserably entangled in some monstrous *Herefy*, or swallow'd up in the *devouring Gulph of Infidelity*. And when Men have thus wilfully darkened, and confounded their own Intellects, it is their Pleasure to puzzle, and mislead other Men's; it is their Ambition to appear considerable at the Head of a Party; and for this End, they lie in Wait, for unsettled Heads, who have smattering enough in Learning, to make their Levity  
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more easy to be practised upon, especially by the scornful Pretence of exposing the Simplicity of the credulous; that is, the far greater Part of Mankind; and detecting the gross Cheats that pass upon such vulgar Souls. Which Insinuations do insensibly convey the Affectation of the Teacher into the Scholar, and soon qualify the willing *Profelyte*, to commence *Professor* of *Scepticism*, and Irreligion. As therefore Sensuality drives great Numbers into this Toil, so Pride, and vain Glory decoys in many more; so easily is *Herefy*, and *Infidelity* propagated, out of the Corruption of humane Nature.

AND indeed, such is the Weakness, as well as Corruption of our Nature, that even where Men do not prostitute themselves to all Manner of Libertinism, where they have no formed Ambition of raising a great Name to themselves in Science, or being distinguished as the Leaders of a Sect; the mere Fondness of Self-Conceit, is apt enough to betray those, who are strongly possessed with it, into this fatal Snare of the Devil. For Self-Conceit gives Men a very untrue Measure, and a very

SERM. very undue Value of their own Abilities,
 VI. which makes them equally prone to Error, and averse to Conviction. It prevents Sedateness, and Solidity of Judgment, lest the Deliberation required to it, should argue Slowness of Parts, and Want of Penetration. It precludes the wiser Determination of second Thoughts, lest it should seem to imply the Commission, and Retraction of a Mistake. It causes Men to disrelish receiv'd Truths, because they require no great Acuteness, to find them out, but are obvious to the Notice of others, as well as themselves: It disgusts them more especially against the receiv'd, and most fundamental Truths of Religion, because there is a more general Consent in them, than in other Things; and therefore the Singularity of their Dissent puffs up these self Admirers, with an high Opinion, that they are more accurate in judging, and sharper in penetrating into Things, than other Men are: For which Reason such Men are wont to be peculiarly delighted with *Paradoxes* in Divinity, because they are hard to be conceiv'd by others; and as violently prejudiced against
Mysteries,

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Mysteries, because they are too hard to be conceiv'd, even by themselves, *who are so wise in their own Eyes*. Here therefore they resolutely stick, let the Revelation be never so plain: The more they are oppos'd, the more they are confirmed in their *Heterodoxes*: Let the concurrent Judgment of the Catholic Church be never so expressly against them; it shall weigh nothing: Their Opposers must all be *Idiots*, the Pretenders to Learning all bewildred, and perfectly void, either of Judgment, or Sincerity. But for themselves they are surrounded with Light; all with them is clear to Demonstration; they seem to themselves reserv'd for these happy Discoveries, because they alone have made strict Researches after Truth, entirely free from Prejudice, and Partiality; which is itself so strong a Prepossession, so strange, and blind an Infatuation, as bespeaks the Men to be impregnable in their own Conceits; and equally incapable of being confuted by Reason, or determin'd by Authority, be their Errors never so irrational, or anti-scriptural. Thus does the reigning Habit of Self-Conceit, which in common Mat-

SERMON. ters exposes its Owner but for a *Fop*, lead
 VI. those, who will needs be wise above other
 Men, into the violent Temptation of turning *Hereticks*, or *Unbelievers*. And thus have I instanced in some of those vitious Habits, which being wilfully cherished in the Heart, do naturally give it an unhappy Propensity towards *Unbelief*.

BUT is *Unbelief*, or *Misbelief* after all, such a wilful, and sinful Distemper of Heart, as has been represented? Some in their abundant Tenderneſs, take the Liberty to ſay not; and they think they can make good their Plea: *First*, becauſe it is not in a Man's Power to believe, or diſbelief juſt what he will, he muſt of Neceſſity be determined to either, as the Evidence ſhall appear to him, and therefore, if he is miſdetermined, the Error muſt be involuntary. And

Secondly, BECAUSE it is poſſible for one that is a *Heretick*, or *Unbeliever*, to be a good moral Man for all that: And that is the main Thing that is needful.

BUT each Branch of this Aſſertion is equally bold, and fallacious. *First*, it is a confident Falſehood, to aſſert; that it is not

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in a Man's Power to believe, or disbelieve S E R M. VI.
what he will; and that therefore his Fault
(if he incurs any) is involuntary. For doubt-
less all Commands, and Prohibitions, sup-
pose Men to be free, and must directly af-
fect the Will, else they could not oblige
the Conscience; and Faith, we know, is in
express Terms commanded, and *Unbelief*
forbidden in holy Writ. Nay our *Saviour*
hath peremptorily declared, that *he that*
believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth
not shall be damned; and 'tis as unreasona-
ble, as 'tis irreverent to think, that God
should not put that in Mens Power, upon
which their Salvation, and Damnation is
to depend; it is palpably absurd to imagine,
that he should require any Thing of his
Creatures, that is out of their Power; or
punish them for any Thing that is una-
voidable.

BUT besides, 'tis notorious, both in Rea-
son, and Fact, whatever vain *Philosophy*
may have taught to the contrary; that the
Will hath oftentimes the chief Stroke in
determining our Assent, or Dissent to such
Things, as are proposed to our Belief.
An undeniable Instance of which may be

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fetched.

S E R M. fetched, even from the common Occur-
 VI. rences of Life; for there is scarce a Re-
 port, or Piece of Intelligence, that passes
 up and down, in which the Interests, or
 Affections of Men are at all concerned;
 but is either believed, or disbelieved, just
 as their Will inclines.

AND if we observe with any Attention,
 how our Belief, or Disbelief of Things is
 wont to be influenced, we shall find that
 the Will has much the same Power in de-
 termining us, as has the Hand that holds
 the Ballance. If the Hand be steady, as
 well as the Scales even, the greatest Weight
 will certainly tend downwards. But if the
 Position of the Hand be but a little varied,
 it may contrary to its own Tendency, be
 determined upwards.

IN like Manner, if the Capacity of judging
 be equal, and the Will impartial; the Assent
 will naturally follow clear, and sufficient
 Evidence: But if the Bent of the Will stand
 otherwise; that very sufficient Evidence
 shall, (how clear soever in itself) lose all
 its Force, and Efficacy. Nay, it is easy to
 put the Case, wherein the same Person shall
 believe one Thing, and disbelieve another,
 upon

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upon the same Kind of Evidence, and with SERM.
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this Difference too, that the Degree of Evidence shall be higher and brighter, for that which is rejected as false, than for that which is admitted as true.

FOR Example, a *Scholar* may admit (as most *Scholars* do) *Cæsar's* Commentaries to be in the main a true *History*, upon the common *Criteria*, or Grounds of Credibility; and yet this very *Scholar*, if he professes *Deism*, shall not so readily assent to the Truth of the *Gospel History*, though it has all the most indubitable Marks of moral Certainty, that any other *History* hath, or can have; and hath this corroborating Circumstance peculiar to itself, that the Writers of it shed their own dearest Blood in Attestation of its Verity. Now in this Case, I say, the Credibility of the *Gospel History*, being not only equal, but far superior to that of any other *History* whatsoever; how comes it to pass, that the lesser Evidence shall preponderate, and not the greater? And since the natural Capacity of judging in the same Person must be allow'd to be equal; what can the Reason be of such unequal Conduct? The

S E R M. Reason manifestly is, that the Affections
VI. have brib'd the Will to influence the Judgment, and therefore the Man, though he is willing enough to believe any reputable *Historian*, yet is he (for private Views) unwilling to afford the same Credit to the *Evangelists*. And consequently, it is as notorious in Fact, that Mens Belief, or Disbelief of Things, is subject to the Determination of the Will; as it is, that there is such a Sect, as that of *Deists* in the World. And this is a sensible, familiar Argument, much more forcible to prove the Sway, and Influence the Will has in such Cases, than any *Philosophical* Subtlety can be to disprove it. Nor will it be of any Avail to urge the trite Observation here, that the Will must of Necessity follow the last Dictate of the Understanding, and embrace, or reject Things according as they are represented; for it is the same Soul, that both willeth, and understandeth; although we in an unaccountable Way, both of thinking, and speaking, are wont to consider these different Faculties of acting in the Soul, as different Agents. And it is in the Power of the Soul,
thus

thus capable of willing, and understanding (by its own inherent Liberty of Acting) to employ, or to suspend, to intend, or to remit the Exercise of its intelligent Faculty, about such, and such certain Objects; and to bestow, or not bestow, due Enquiry, and Examination into the Agreement, or Disagreement of such, and such certain Ideas, and into the Motives of Assent, with Respect to such, and such Objects as are proposed to its Belief: And all this being undeniably in the Power of the Soul, as a free Agent, whenever any Person is endued with a competent Capacity of Judging, and is furnished with the proper Means of Information, and Motives of Assent; if that Person, in these Circumstances, shall reject any Thing as incredible, which is really probable; it is notorious he must be a wilful *Disbeliever*, even in Despight of his own Understanding; because, as the Circumstances are put, there is nothing wanting but the Will, to enquire into the Reason of Things, and the Nature of the Evidence before him, to determine him to be a *Believer*. And consequently in all Cases so circumstantiated, the Mis-

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to the common Way of Speaking) are owing beyond all Dispute, to the Misconduct of the Will; the Will obstructs the Lights, that should inform, and direct the Understanding; and having thus industriously blinded its own Guide, is reduced under a Necessity of following it as blindly.

AND therefore the Disbelief of all, or any of the chief Articles of the *Christian* Faith, by those who have been made acquainted with the Principles of our Religion, (which is the Case in its true Circumstances) is not only strictly imputable to the Will, but, as springing from a most perverse Abuse of that noble Faculty, is the more heinously culpable, and justly damnable. It appears then, that it is much more in Mens Power to believe, or disbelieve as they will, than is commonly apprehended; nay, that the Will hath the chief Sway in determining Mens Belief, and Unbelief, in all Matters, where Interest, or Affection intermeddle, and most especially in the great Point of Religion, which is that now before us.

Secondly,

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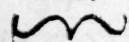
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Secondly, BUT be it so, may some think, S E R M.
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there is a *Salvo* still left for those, that don't find themselves induced to believe, what is imposed upon their Faith; for a Man may possibly be an *Unbeliever*, and yet a good Moral Man notwithstanding, and that's the main Thing necessary. Now this must be understood, either of *Unbelievers* (in the grossest Sense of the Word) who don't admit so much as the first Principles of Religion; or of such *Unbelievers* as do not give Credit to reveal'd Religion, or else of such *Unbelievers* as do embrace, what is plain in the *Christian Revelation*, *i. e.* the Morality, but cannot give their Assent to the sublimer Doctrines, which are called *Mysteries*.

OF each of which *Unbelievers*, let us enquire a little, how far they are capable of being good moral Men, or have any Title so to be accounted. And in the first Place I demand; is it to be deem'd a Thing feasible, or credible, that he who is no *Believer* in the grossest Sense, *i. e.* indeed of no Religion, should nevertheless be a strict Practiser of moral Virtue, which is what I conceive to be meant by a good

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Heb. xi. 6.

moral Man? This is so very shocking at the very first Proposal, that he who can believe it, may, I think, even believe what he pleases; and is a fit Example to illustrate my former Argument, concerning the Power of the Will over the Understanding. We know who at least hath said on the contrary, that *without Faith, it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* The Truth of the Assertion is evident to Reason, that the Practice of Virtue cannot stand, unless it rest upon the Foundation of this Faith; because without that Foundation (as the Nature, and Condition of Mankind is) it would want its necessary Support, and Encouragement. For that Man who doth not consider Virtue, under the Notion of Duty, and practise it with Regard, and Submission to God as the *Lawgiver*, and *Judge*, who will reward the Good, and punish the Evil; will hardly think himself under any other Obligation, or Inducement to be uniformly virtuous. Because if Virtue be not a Duty, and not to be rewarded as
such

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such hereafter, nor the contrary punished; SERM.
then, when the Practice of Virtue shall VI.
happen notably to interfere with our present Inclinations, or Interests, there can be no other effectual Restraint, or Tie found to bind us up to the rigid Observance of it.

THERE is indeed a *modern Refiner* upon common Notions, or rather a Subverter of common Principles, who affects to appear wiser than other Men; by shewing them how to be wittily wicked. This Man advances it as a Problem possible enough to be true, that a Society of *Atheists* might make a Shift to live comfortably enough together, in the interchangeable Performance of good Offices; and the reasonable Practice of social Virtues. A *Paradox* that will never be confirmed, nor confuted from Experience; because there never was a *Commonwealth* composed of such *Animals*, nor is ever like to be; which by the Way is a pretty strong Presumption against the Truth of the Problem itself.

BUT the general Reason I but now insisted on, will be sufficient to confute it; *i. e.* that nothing less than a Sense of Duty,

SERMON. ty, and a fitting Respect to the *Recompence*
 VI. *of Reward*, can effectually oblige, or determine Men to be virtuous, where Virtue, and temporal Interest are inconsistent with each other. I say, this Reason is sufficient to shew all such imaginary Schemes to be utterly impracticable; because all Compacts entred into upon any other Principle, would be found too loose a Cement, either to knit a Society into Union at first, or to keep it firm, and compact, if we could suppose it once formed.

AND the Reason that this vain Man offers, in Opposition to the common Sense of Mankind, is as frivolous, as it is fallacious; it is no more than this; that it is too frequent amongst Men, even such as do embrace the Principles of Religion, to suffer themselves to be influenced by other Motives in the Conduct of their Lives; that humane Virtue flows for the most Part, not from any Conformity to Principle, but another Cause; that it is the Offspring, not of Duty, but Convenience; that Chastity with the Women, is but the tender Care of Reputation; and Courage with the

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the Men, a nice Point of Honour, and that such Views, and Motives as these, would have the same Influence they now have, in a Society of *Atheists*; and that such a Society might therefore subsist upon this Basis, in tolerable good Order.

WHERE 'tis too obvious to escape Observation; that this *Blasphemer* of Religion, is at the same Time a Reviler of humane Nature; or at least delights to magnify its Infirmities. He supposes the Generality of Mankind almost to be void of Religion, or under no Influence from it, as a Proof that there is no Necessity of being religious, and that Religion is useless to Society. But surely, this cannot be the impartial State of the Case; Morality generally speaking cannot be that empty Shew, and Cheat, as he would represent it. Bad as the World is, there are great Numbers, it is to be hoped, who do seriously, and sincerely put themselves under the Guidance of Religion; and do conduct the main Tenor of their Lives accordingly: And doubtless, the Terrors of Religion do help to restrain many more, from being exorbitantly vitious, whom the more ingenuous

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SERM.

VI.

genuous Motive of Love does not work upon so effectually, as to win them to a perfect good Liking of their Duty, and make them stedfast, and uniform in the Practice of it.

BUT, supposing that the Degeneracy of Manners were as great, as he represents it, and there were as little true Virtue in the World, as he reports; what Force of Argument is there in all this, to prove, that the Practice of moral Virtue may be maintain'd, and humane Society supported without the Aid of religious Principles? For the Sophistry concludes all along from a Particular, to the Universal, and comes but to this at last. Many Men who profess Religion, are not influenced in their Actions by their religious Principles; and therefore there is no Need, nor Use of any such Principles. Many Men have no Regard to their Duty; and therefore it were no great Matter, if the Sense of Duty were universally extinguish'd: The World is very wicked, with all the supposed Influences of Religion, and therefore could be no wickedder without all Religion. Many Mens Virtues are but counterfeit, and yet

get not found to be destructive of humane Society; and therefore if all Virtue were counterfeit, and all Religion abolished; Society might still subsist, and stand fixed upon no Foundation. These are wild Conceits indeed, for Conclusions I cannot call them: It would certainly be more reasonable to conclude, since the World is so wicked, and disorderly as it is, notwithstanding all the Motives, and Restraints of Religion, that are so well fitted to operate upon Mens Hopes, and Fears; I say, it would be much more reasonable to conclude, that if all Men were as free from these Obligations, and Restraints, and as devoid of Principles, as some are; the Licentiousness of Practice would be unbounded, and the Confusion intolerable. So false is the Suggestion, that he, who is no *Believer*, may be a strict Practiser of Virtue, to which he has nothing constantly to bind, and engage him. So vain the Imagination, that there might be a happy Settlement, in a Commonwealth of *Atheists*, where the very Ligaments of Society are wanting.

THE common Principles of Faith then,
it

SERM. it must be granted, are necessary to the
 VI. Support of Virtue. But no Need may
 some think of having any Thing farther
 obtruded upon our Belief. The Belief of
 God's Existence, and a future State of
 Rewards, and Punishments, which are
 the Principles of natural Religion, are suf-
 ficient, they may think, to animate, and
 support our virtuous Endeavours, and
 therefore there could be no Necessity of
 Revelation; and surely it will not be de-
 nied, that a Man may be a good moral
 Man, and yet not a Believer of reveal'd
 Religion.

BUT this too is a very hasty, as well as
 bold Conclusion. For admitting it possi-
 ble for a Man to be a good moral Liver,
 upon the Principles of natural Religion;
 I would fain know how any Man now a-
 days, and in a *Christian* Country, comes to
 be established in the Belief, even of these
 Principles. The antient *Philosophers* were
 as inquisitive, and sagacious (without Di-
 minution be it spoken) as any of the Mo-
 derns; and yet they were miserably be-
 wilder'd, even in the greatest Point of a
 future State. They seem to have it in

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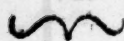
VI.

View sometimes, and aim at it pretty noticeably, and make themselves secure of it; but then they soon lose Sight of it again, and find themselves left in great Uncertainties, and Perplexities. What is it then that makes the *Deist* better settled in his Judgment than the *Heathen*? It is his Acquaintance with the *Christian* Revelation, which illuminates this dark Point, and clears it from all Doubts, and thereby has furnished the World with a stronger Support, and higher Encouragement to Virtue, than it had before; and consequently, if we should suppose a *Deist* to be truly virtuous, it must be upon a *Christian* Principle, and he is manifestly beholden to Revelation for it, loath as he is to own it: And I desire to know, whether so much Arrogance, and Ingratitude, as appears in his disowning it, can be thought fairly to consist with the Supposition of a true, and genuine Virtue, or suit with the Character of a virtuous Person?

MOREOVER, if we consider the Matter attentively; the true Standard of moral Virtue, and the just Extent, and Compass of it; is only to be learned from the *Christian*

SERM. *stian* Revelation. The *Philosophers* indeed

VI.

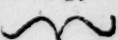


have severally laid down many good Rules in Morality, and said many Things finely, and made some noble Flights, too lofty indeed ever to be reach'd in Practice; but with all their grave Speeches, and severest Precepts, there is something still defective; nay, something irregular, and blame-worthy intermingled. But in the *Gospel*, *whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, and of good Report*: All these Things without the Mixture of any Thing that is otherwise, are perfectly compriz'd, and strictly required. And since the *Gospel* is the only compleat System of moral Duties, (which it is in vain for any Body to deny) whosoever would be reputed a Practiser of Virtue, must either be acquainted with the *Gospel*, and as far as Morality goes, an Observer of it; or else in some Measure unacquainted with his Duty, and consequently must fall short of it in Practice; unless it could be pretended, that some of the moral Duties in *Christianity*, are not Duties of universal Obligation, which yet 'tis

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undeniable they are all of them; deducible S E R M.
from the natural Notions we have of God, and VI.
evidently perfective of the Nature of Man. 

It is farther therefore to be observ'd, that the Practice of moral Virtue, as it is enjoin'd in the *Gospel*, is establish'd upon the clearest Principles, enforced by the most powerful Motives, and strengthened by such divine Aids, as will appear to be no more than necessary, if only we compare the Difficulty of our Duty, with the Infirmities of our Nature; of which both the *Deist*, and the *Christian* have too sensible Experience. For what is it that the *Gospel* principally requires of us? The Love of God in the intensest Degree, with all our Heart, and Mind, and Strength; and a zealous Imitation of all his moral Perfections, so far as they are imitable, even *to be holy as he is holy, and pure as he is pure; nay, and perfect as he is perfect:* And strict, and impartial Justice, never varying from that inflexible Rule of *doing as we would be done by*; a fervent, and unconfined Charity, extending to our bitterest Enemies, and the Forgiveness of the

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greatest

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greatest injuries: An Alienation of the Affections from all earthly Things, and the fixing them upon the Things, that are heavenly: A Refusal of such Gratifications as Sense most covets, and a Subjugation of the Flesh, and all fleshly Appetites, even to a Purity in Thought: And in one Word, a Victory over ourselves, and the World, even whilst we are in the Body, and cannot depart out of the World till our appointed Time. These, and such as these are the singular Instances, the elevated Degrees of Virtue, that the *Gospel* requires; which must all be acknowledged to be Virtues of general Obligation, because they do so manifestly tend to the Improvement, and Perfection of humane Nature, and are so many Approaches to a Likeness with God, and Preparations for the Enjoyment of him. But then they are Virtues so difficult in the Attainment to frail Flesh, and Blood, that a Man had need be persuaded, that so is the express Will of God; and that he will exceedingly reward those that submit their own Wills, to his Will, and that he will assist their weak Wills, by the Energy of his

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his free Spirit; that he will accept of their humble, and sincere Endeavours, instead of a Virtue consummated in all the possible Instances, and Degrees of it; and their unfeigned Repentance, in lieu of sinless Perfection: I say, a Man had need be very firmly persuaded of all this, who shall undertake a Task so much above his Strength, with any Cheerfulness; or acquit himself of it with any reasonable Hopes of Approbation, or Acceptance. Now it is the *Gospel* alone that presents the true Believer with explicate Declarations, Assurances, and Promises, with Relation to all these Things; and therefore the *Deist*, who believes not the *Gospel* to be a *Revelation* of God's Will, must be totally destitute of some of these Helps, and Encouragements to Virtue; and of all of them in some Measure. And if a *Christian* with all these Advantages, finds the Difficulties of Virtue, not easily, scarce surmountable, and the Mastery in it, scarce attainable; surely the *Deist* without these Advantages, will never be able to acquit himself in all Points like a good moral Man, to finish so tedious a Course of Duty; he will rather

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frequently

SER M frequently be found failing; and chiefly
 VI. there, where his Constancy ought to be
 most approved, that is in the most difficult
 Trials. But

Thirdly, FARE it as it will with the
Deists, may some say, there are those who
 do believe what is plain in the *Gospel*, *i. e.*
 the Morality, though they cannot believe,
 what they cannot comprehend, *i. e.* the
Mysteries.

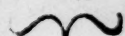
THEY disbelieve *Mysteries*, not seeing
 what Need, or Use there is of them to-
 wards making Men better, which is the
 apparent Tendency of Morality; and *that*
 therefore they esteem as the main Thing
 necessary: They embrace Morality as be-
 ing consonant to the natural Notions they
 have of God, and therefore the more likely
 to be his Will; but they reject *Mysteries*, as
 being above their Comprehension, and they
 cannot think themselves bound to believe
 they know not what.

Now when we are upon Enquiry, whe-
 ther a Man of this odd Make, or Temper
 of Mind, may be a good moral Man, not-
 withstanding; we must not be understood
 of the *physical* Possibilities, but only of the
moral

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moral Probabilities of Things; of what is most likely to be, or not to be, the Temper, Conduct, and Pretences of the Person considered. I shall therefore take Notice of some shrew'd Exceptions, some great Improbabilities, that seem to lie against the supposed Virtue of such a Person.

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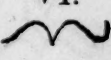
THE *First* Exception is, that the Principle upon which such an one proceeds, is not consistent with itself; for he pretends to embrace the *moral* Part of the *Gospel*, and holds himself obliged to obey it as the revealed Will of God, and at the same Time, disbelieves the Mysteries, which it is the Will of God we should believe, as being revealed in the same *Gospel*; and yet the Revelation of these Mysteries, is as plain, and express, as is that of moral Duties; although the Things themselves be not so intelligible; the Revelation of both is equally attested to be from God, and stands upon the same Foot of Evidence. It is therefore shrewdly to be suspected, that he who doth not firmly assent to the one, doth not cordially believe, and embrace the other; at least not with such an obedient Disposition of Heart, as will determine a

SERM. Man to be virtuous, against the Bent of his
 VI. corrupt Will, and Inclinations; which is
 the sure Test of genuine Virtue.

AND again, the moral Conduct of such a Person, is the more liable to Exception, because there is no tolerable Reason to be given, why God should not make Trial of his Obedience, by proposing Things to his Belief, that are hard to be conceived; as well as by requiring the Observance of such Things, as are hard to be practised. For (as a great Author well remarks) the Prerogative of God extendeth, as well to the Reason, as Will of Man; so that as we are to obey his Law, though we find a Reluctance in our Will, so are we to believe his Word, though we find a Reluctance in our Reason. And as 'tis no Objection, against the Reasonableness of certain moral Duties, that they are against our natural Propensities, and above our natural Strength, and therefore impracticable; so neither is it fit to be objected in Matters of Faith, that they are above the Reach of natural Reason, and not analagous to any Things else, we know in Nature; and therefore must
 be

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be incredible. And since God may justly require, and Man ought to give Proof of his Obedience, both by doing his Will, and believing his holy Word; the *half Christian*, who would be thought a moral Man, and yet is no Believer of Mysteries, stands manifestly condemned by that known Maxim of St. James: *Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.* SERM.
VI.


Jam. ii 10.

FOR he that is guilty of one Piece of Wilfulness, and Disobedience, may as well be guilty of another; as not being restrain'd by the Sense of Duty. The same rebellious Reason, the same stubborn Will, that tempts him to reject the Belief of *Mysteries* as incredible; might have tempted him, (if his *Foible* had lain that Way) to refuse the Practice of certain moral Virtues, as impracticable. And where the Spirit of Disobedience, so notoriously manifests itself, in the Disbelief of *Mysteries*; it may well be doubted, whether that Man's outward Observance of the moral Part of the Law, will deserve to be placed to the Account of Virtue; because it ap-

SERM. appears not to proceed from any Reverence
 VI. of God's Authority, or humble Sense of
 Duty towards him.

AGAIN *Thirdly*, The Insinuation, that *Mysteries* have no Tendency to make Men better, and therefore are presumed to be unnecessary, is false, and slanderous, and withal so vain, and arrogant; that it administers just Cause of Suspicion, that the *Disbeliever* of *Mysteries* is not so perfect in his Morals, as he should be, because he wilfully deprives himself of one of the chief Helps to the Practice of Virtue.

FOR to shew the Vanity, and Falshood of this Pretence, if there were no other Reason to be assigned, why God requires the Belief of *Mysteries*, it might be sufficient to say; that these Means are admirably well fitted, even to make such *Cavillers* as these better than they are, if their own Obstinacy prevented it not; that is to say, by repressing their Pride, and bringing down their high Conceits of themselves, and bringing them to a more humble, teachable, and governable Disposition of Mind.

BUT

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BUT to let that pass, it might be easily made out, if I had Time to enter into the Detail; that all the most important Articles of our *Christian* Faith, have an immediate Reference, and an admirable Subserviency to the Purposes of true Religion, and Virtue. Let it suffice to instance in one, which is the main Hinge of the whole *Christian* Dispensation; viz. the Redemption by the Son of God incarnate. For is it not a most wonderful, and glorious Manifestation of God's tender Love, and Pity to the sinful Race of Men; that he should send his own Son, *the Likeness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person, in the Likeness of sinful Flesh, to suffer for Sin, the Just for the Unjust*; and thereby propitiate God's Anger, and restore Sinners to Favour, and Mercy? And is it not at the same Time the greatest Demonstration of God's just Indignation, and exceeding Hatred against Sin, that the Atonement of it, should cost no less a Price, *than the Blood of the Son of God*? And can any Thing have so direct a Tendency, or so powerful an Operation to raise, and inflame our Love towards God,

SERM. on the one Hand; and to beget in our Souls
 VI. an utter Detestation of Sin, on the other;
 as the Contemplation of this very My-
 stery? And as they who thro' their Disbelief
 of this Mystery debase the Son of God into a
 Creature, (how excellent soever) do thereby
 infinitely depreciate God's wonderful Love
 to Mankind, and represent Sin as exceed-
 ingly less offensive to him than it is; so do
 they by the very same Means extinguish
 the noblest Incentive to the Love of God,
 which is the true Spring of all ingenuous
 Obedience; and take away the most quick-
 ening Motive of all others to the Abhor-
 rence, and Avoidance of Sin: That is, its
 infinite Odiousness in the Sight of God,
 our Redeemer, and our Judge.

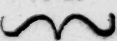
LET not then the Exploders of *Myste-
 ries*, value themselves upon their Morals,
 when 'tis so apparent from this single In-
 stance, that they deprive themselves of
 some of the chief Aids, and Encourage-
 ments to Virtue, and the best Supports to
 their own Infirmities.

NOR will that thin Subterfuge cover
 them from Blame, that in embracing the
 moral Part of the *Gospel*, they attend to
 the

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the main Thing necessary; since the great MYSTERY of our Redemption in *Christ*, is of such evident Necessity, and Use towards the Advancement of true Piety, and Virtue.

SERMON
VI.


BESIDES, as has been before observed; they who submit to the Authority of the *Gospel* in one Case, and refuse to yield to it in another, are left without Excuse; because the whole stands upon the same Foot of Evidence. And if two Things are made necessary in the same *Gospel*; they who shall presume to say, that one of the two is unnecessary; do as much as in them lies, to evacuate the Law of God, by drawing his Commandments into Competition; boldly deciding, that the *one must be done, and the other may be left undone*; when yet both are enjoined by the same Authority, and ought to be equally regarded, and obey'd. Now it is too plain to be denied, that the *Gospel* makes two Sorts of Things, necessary to Salvation: There are Things necessary to be done, and Things necessary to be believed: There are Things, which in his Judgment (who shall finally be Judge of Quick, and Dead) *be that believeth shall be saved, and he that believ-*

S E R M.

VI.

eth not shall be damned. The wilful Disbelief therefore of such Things, (and such is the Mystery of our Redemption, with all its main Dependents) is without *Peradventure* a damnable Sin, and it must be an unpardonable Presumption to think otherwise. Rash and presumptuous, and unwarrantable too, is that crude Saying, too frequent in the Mouths of some wavering *Christians*; that no *Heresy* is so bad as a wicked Life! What Need, what Room for any Comparison between the two, when both are so bad, as without Repentance to be destructive of Salvation? And what can be worse than that? For *St. Paul* (we know) ranks *Heresies* with some of the most flagrant Sins that are; and concludes it under the same Sentence of Condemna-

Gal. v. 19,

20, 21.

tion. Now the Works of the Flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleannefs, Lasciviousnefs, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkennefs, Revellings, and such like, of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in Time past, that they which do such Things shall not inherit the

Kingdom.

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Kingdom of God. Where it is remarkable, SERM.
VI. that *Heresies* are not only reckoned amongst the greatest Immoralities, but are made equally the Works of the Flesh, *i. e.* the Effect of inordinate Lust, or vicious Habit, and are equally excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven.

AND 'tis as remarkable, that as *Heresies* are numbred with other notorious Vices, so *Heretics* (if ye look over the Memoirs of such Men from the Beginning, to this Day) have always been found very irregular, and immoral in their Practice. Not perhaps in such Instances, as are most scandalous in the Eye of the World, and most liable to the Lash of the Law; but in other Instances, that are no less contrary to good Manners, and stand condemned with equal Reason, and Authority. They have not so often perhaps been Drunkards, and Revellers, Adulterers, and Murderers: For such Enormities would soon have blasted the Credit of a growing Sect, and defeated their main Design.

THEY have affected therefore for the most Part to put on the Appearance at least of more Sanctity, and Devotion, more religious

SERM. VI. religious Austerity, and a stricter Morality than other Men: But with all their Disguises, they have never been able to conceal, that they were envious, wrathful, contentious, proud, ambitious, presumptuous, Despisers of other Men, of their Betters in Point of Learning, of their Superiors in Place, and Station, and of all Government, and all Authority indeed, that of *St. Paul* not excepted.

Now to God the Father, &c.

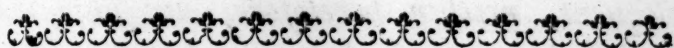


SERMON



S E R M O N VII.

Of the swift Progress of the Gospel.



ACTS xix. 20.

*So mightily grew the Word of God,
and prevailed.*



E read in the Book of *Ex-* S E R M.
odus, when God laid his VII.
 Commands upon *Moses* to Chap. iii.
 go in his Name, and demand the Release of the *Israelites* from the *Egyptian* Oppressor, that he
 was full of his Exceptions, and by no Means
 apt

SER M.
VII.

Chap. iv.
i.

Ver. 10.

apt to persuade himself, that he had Authority, Credit, or Eloquence enough to manage so nice, and unwelcome an Embassy, and to a Prince so haughty, and tyrannical; and therefore to this Purpose he puts his Scruples one after another; *Who am I* (says he at first, Ver. 11.) *that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the Children of Israel?* And again, *But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my Voice; for they will say, The Lord hath not appear'd unto thee.* And a third Time, *O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy Servant, but I am slow of Speech, and of a slow Tongue.*

To cure him therefore of this unseasonable Diffidence, and to inspire him with Resolution suitable to such an Undertaking, God thought fit to promise him his own special Direction, and Assistance, to be with his Mouth, and to teach him what he should say, and to arm him moreover with the Power of Miracles, to confirm the Truth of his Commission. And if *Moses* his Commission did require such an extraordinary Confirmation, and Enforcement,

ment, much more must that of our Sa-
viour Christ to his Apostles, recorded,
Mat. xxviii. 19. Go ye and teach all Na-
tions, baptizing them in the Name of the
Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost,
or as St. Mark reports it, Go ye into all the
World, and preach the Gospel to every Crea-
ture. A Commission so noble in its De-
sign, so large in its Extent, so difficult in
its Execution; that nothing less than a
Power eminently divine, could enable them
to go through with it. For had the A-
postles been left to their own Qualifications
alone, without any other Furniture, than
what Nature, Education, or Experience
had supplied them with, they might have
been allow'd to plead in their own Excuse;
Lord, who are we, that we should be sent
to proselyte all Nations? How should e-
leven Men of us, low, contemptible, de-
stitute as we are, be able to compass, and
convert the whole World? We are not
furnish'd with Learning, or Languages, or
Reasoning, or Rhetoric sufficient to con-
vince the learned Rabbi's, and subtle Phi-
losophers; much less are we prepar'd, to
make Head against the combin'd Spite, and

SERM.
VII.

Chap. xvi.
25.

SERM. Rage of Jew, and Heathen, or to bear up
 VII. against the sanguinary Laws, and armed
 Force of Tyrants, and Persecutors.

BUT that there might be no Room for
 such Doubts on the *Apostle's* Part, and
 no Reason for others to disbelieve them,
Christ thought fit in the first Place to de-
 clare the Plenitude of his own Power: *All*
 Mat. xxviii. 18. *Power* (says he) *is given unto me in Hea-*
ven, and in Earth; of which they had already
 seen a very signal Instance in his Resurrec-
 tion from the Dead. Having declared this,
 he delegates his Authority to them, *to go*
and disciple all Nations, and to animate
 them with Zeal, and Courage to undertake,
 and execute this weighty Trust, he pro-
 mises to be perpetually present with them,
 and assisting to them, by the Energy, and
 Virtue of his holy Spirit; to send the Promise
 of the Father upon them, even the Spirit
 of Truth, to lead them into all Truth, to
 give them a Mouth, and Wisdom which
 all their Adversaries should not be able to
 gainsay, nor resist; to bear authentic Te-
 stimony to their Doctrine, by supernatu-
 ral Works, and Wonders; and in a Word,
 to endue them *with Power from on high*,
 every

every Way equal to the Difficulty of their S E R M.
Charge and Care. VII.

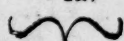
AND now all Distrust, and Fear was vanish'd on the Sudden. They who were ere while so timorous, so doubtful, so very slow of Heart to believe, we find now returning to *Jerusalem* with great Joy, as the Lord had commanded, big with the Expectation of this glorious Promise, and entirely relying on his Truth, and Power to fulfil it. Which within a few Days they heard, and saw, and felt in a most remarkable Manner; *For suddenly there* ^{Acts ii. 2, 3, 4} *came a Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind, and it filled all the House where they were sitting. And there appear'd unto them cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, and it sate upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance.*

AND from henceforward being sensible, that their own natural Defects were abundantly supplied by the supernatural Aids of the holy Spirit, *They went forth, and* ^{Mark xvi. 20.} *preached every where, the Lord working with them. and confirming the Word, with*

SERM. *Signs following*; and among other Signs,
 VII. that undaunted Presence of Mind, and
 Boldness of Speech, that invincible Forti-
 tude and Patience, with which they spoke,
 and acted, and suffer'd in the Cause of
Christ, was none of the least miraculous.

AND the Work of God prosper'd ac-
 cordingly in their Hands, and the Success
 they had in it was equally prodigious,
 with the Means they made use of.
 The Seed sown took rooting apace, it
 fastned itself deep, and spread itself wide,
 and multiplied, and brought forth Fruit
 exceedingly. No Tares of *Heresy*, nor
 Thorns of Self-love, or secular Care could
 choak it; no Heat of Persecution could
 scorch or blast it, not all the envious Art,
 or brutal Force of Men, or even of the
 infernal Powers could destroy it; *so mighti-
 ly* (as the Text informs us) *grew the Word
 of God, and prevailed*. So mightily in-
 deed, that it was plainly above humane
 Strength, the Increase was certainly of
 God. So that the very Propagation of the
Gospel itself, if duly weigh'd, and con-
 sider'd, is one of the most pregnant Argu-
 ments in the World to evince its Truth,
 and

and Divinity. And that you may have the Satisfaction to see that it is really so, you shall give me Leave to look a little more narrowly into the Text, and enquire,

S E R M.
VII.


I. *First*, INTO the Fact itself, what the Growth of the *Gospel* was, and how much it prevail'd, upon its first Planting by the *Apostles*.

II. *Secondly*, How many, and great the Difficulties were, over which it did prevail; from both which compar'd together, it will be easy to collect;

III. *Thirdly*, WHAT that superior Power was, by which it was thus wonderfully maintained, and propagated.

I. *First*, I AM to enquire into the Text itself, what the Growth of the *Gospel* was, and how much it prevailed upon its first Planting by the *Apostles*.

AND though the History of the *Acts* gives no Account of the Travails, and the Labours of any of the *Apostles*, besides St. *Peter*, and St. *Paul*, with two or three of their fellow *Labourers*, and of theirs not a

SERM. perfect Account neither; since 'tis well
 VII. known, they both liv'd above twenty Years
 after the Thread of this *History* breaks off;
 I say this notwithstanding, we have ample
 Information, even from this *Epitome*, of
 the swift Progress, and amazing Success of
 the *Gospel*, under the Cultivation, and Care
 of these two *Apostles*.

FOR the Gift of Tongues was no sooner
 bestow'd, but it was employ'd to very ex-
 cellent Purpose; and by one single Sermon
 of St. *Peter's*, there was an immediate Ac-
 cession of Three Thousand Souls to the
 Church, and presently after Five Thou-
 sand more were added to these. And we
 read, *That the Word of God increased; and*
the Number of the Disciples multiplied
greatly in Jerusalem; and a great Company
of the Priests were obedient to the Faith.
 And again we find, *that the Churches through-*
out all Judea, and Galilee, and Sama-
ria were edified, and multiplied. At *An-*
tioch we are told, that many of the *Jews,*
and religious Profelites follow'd Paul, and
Barnabas; and at Iconium they so spake,
that a great Multitude, both of the Jews,
and also of the Greeks believ'd. At *Corinth*

Acts ii. 41.

Chap. iv.

4.

Chap. vi.

7.

Chap. ix.

31.

Chap. xiii.

Chap. xiv.

1.

of the Gospel.

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we hear that *Crispus the chief Ruler of the Synagogue, believ'd in the Lord with all his House; and many of the Corinthians besides.* S E R M. VII.
 And at *Jerusalem St. Paul declar'd particularly, what Things God had done among the Gentiles by his Ministry; a certain Sign that it had been remarkably successful in their Conversion; and the Elders there return'd him a full equivalent for his welcome News, Thou seest Brother how many Thousands of Jews there are which believe.* Chap. xviii. 8. Chap. xxi. 19. Chap. xxi. 20.

AND doubtless, if it be true (what seems to be with good Reason suppos'd) that the *Apostles* spent their first twelve Years at *Jerusalem*, they must make a mighty Harvest on it all that Time; and in all Probability their Ministry was attended with equal Success, when they went abroad among the Dispersions; as the Epistles of *St. James, St. Peter, and St. John*, and that of *St. Paul to the Hebrews*, in Part may testify.

AND there is no Reason to make it a Question, but when they turn'd to the *Gentiles*, they were still as happy in their Endeavours. For there was a vast Concourse of this Sort at *Jerusalem*; devout Acts ii. 5.

SERM. *Men of every Nation under Heaven, i. e.*
 VII. *Profelites*, that fear'd, and worshipp'd the
 true God, but submitted not to the Law
 of *Moses*; and therefore as being free from
 that Prepossession, which was too apt to
 blind the *Jews*; they were of all Men the
 best dispos'd to embrace the Faith of
Christ, and the fittest to recommend it to
 those *Gentiles*, that were less knowing than
 themselves.

So that all these Circumstances laid to-
 gether, we may justly conclude, in Pro-
 portion to what we find related in the
 short *Acts* we have of *St. Peter*, and *St.*
Paul; that the Labours of all the rest of
 the *Apostles* had their desir'd Effect, and
 consequently that the Numbers of the Con-
 verts, that they made, must needs be pro-
 digiously great.

AND this we may learn from the very
 Confession of their Enemies, and Persecu-
 tors: For *Pliny* within three or four Years
 after the Death of *St. John*, owns it to the
 Emperor *Trajan*, " That he was shock'd
 " at the numerous Appearance of *Christians*,
 " Persons of both Sexes, and all Ages, and
 " Conditions, that were ready to hazard
 " their

“ their utmost, for the Sake of their Re-
 “ ligion. SERM.
VII.

AND *Tertullian* one of the antient *Apo-*
logists, within a hundred Years after, scru-
 ples not to make it his public Boast, that
 they were nigh a Majority in every City.
 Nay, he carries it yet higher, and tells the
Heathens to their Faces, “ That this *Up-*
 “ *start*, despised *Sect*, had fill’d their Cities,
 “ and their Provinces, their Councils, and
 “ their Camps, the Palace, and the Se-
 “ nate-house, and what not? And that
 “ their Multitudes were such, that should
 “ they have withdrawn themselves into
 “ some Remote Part of the World, the
 “ *Empire* would in a Manner have been
 “ exhausted, and left all in dismal Soli-
 “ tude, and Silence.

AND let it suffice thus far to have en-
 quir’d into the Fact itself, what the Growth,
 and Progress of the *Gospel* was, under the
 Ministry of the *Apostles*, which must be al-
 low’d to be marvellously great, if we con-
 sider in how short a Time, and with how
 swift a Course, it shot like Lightning from
East to West, adding Conquest to Con-
 quest, and making *Profelites* of all Nations.

But

SER. M. But the Wonder will still improve upon
 VII. our Hands, if we proceed,

II. To the *Second* Enquiry, viz. how many, and great the Difficulties were, over which it did prevail.

IF indeed *Christianity* had been only a pleasing Novelty, or a pretty refining upon *Judaism*, or *Gentilism*, or a disguis'd Mixture of both; if it had been dress'd up plausibly with Art, suited to Mens Palates, and fram'd for their Interests, or easily to be reconcil'd with the prevailing Customs of the World, and the vicious Inclinations of Mankind: Had it been such a Contrivance, I say, it might (without a Prodigy) like other fortunate *Impostures*, have obtain'd a Footing, and either by Craft, or Force perhaps render'd itself somewhat considerable.

BUT this was far from being the Case; for *Christianity* was an Enemy to the World, and therefore the World was an Enemy to *Christianity*, and industriously retarded its Progress, by all the Obstacles that Prejudice, Vice, Interest, and Power could clog up its Way with. And all these Obstacles
 were

were to be remov'd, 'ere it could have its free Course: But by whom, or how? Even by the most unlikely Instruments, and the most unpromising Method, that could be thought of; by no other than a Parcel of *illiterate, and contemptible Mechanics*; without any Subtlety of Arguing, or Slight of Persuasion, or secular Aid, (of which alas they were wholly destitute) but in Opposition to all these, by the naked Force, and Lustre of Truth, and by the Simplicity of Preaching; nay, by preaching up the Virtue of a crucified Saviour, which was already Matter of *Scandal*, and Derision; to *the Jews* a *Cor. i.* *Stumbling-block*, and to *the Greeks Foolish-* ^{23.} *ness.*

AND if *Christianity* against all this strong Combination surviv'd, as it did, and flourish'd, and became in a short Space of Time, as *Porphyry* unwillingly call'd it, *ἡ κρατῆσα διδαχή*, this is a Thing really to be admir'd at, and let it be of whose doing it will, it is, and must be *marvellous in our Eyes.*

AND since Admiration leads the Way oftentimes to Knowledge, it may be useful

SER M. ful perhaps to enter into Particulars, and
 VII. take a nearer View of those Obstacles,
 which stood in the Way of the *Gospel*, at
 its first Publication; but were not able to
 obstruct its Passage. And

THE *First* Obstacle was from Prejudice, that is always an Opposer of Truth, but never more unreasonably, and violently so, than when 'tis riveted by Education, and strengthened by Prescription, and countenanced by great Authorities, which was unhappily the Case, both of *Jew*, and *Gentile*, at that Time.

THE *Jews* for their Part were extremely zealous of their Law, which was confessedly of divine Institution; and as fond of their Traditions, which were impos'd on them under the Name of venerable Antiquity: But above all Things they were delighted with the vain Expectation of a temporal *Messiah*, who was to appear, as they imagin'd, in great Power, and Splendour. And therefore to hear their Ceremonies, and Traditions slighted, by a Person of so mean, and despicable a Figure, as *Jesus* was; to hear their own *Law*, and their *Prophets* accommodated, to prove, that

that even he was the very *Christ* that they expected; this was a Doctrine so opposite to their prejudicate Notions, that it must needs be very difficult to be swallow'd; especially since it could not be embrac'd, without owning themselves in Effect to be the Murderers of their *Saviour*, and *Blasphemers* against the *Holy Ghost*.

AND the *Gentiles* labour'd under much the same Prepossession; for the Profession of Religion, that they had been brought up in, was *Polytheism*: And for this they thought, they had the specious Plea of Antiquity, and Universality, and moreover the Favour of the Gods, whom they worshipp'd. And for them to be told after all, that amidst their Multiplicity, they were still ignorant of the true God, that he *dwelletb not in Temples made with Hands*; that no Man hath seen him at any Time, but the only begotten Son which is in the Bosom of the Father, he hath declar'd him; and that *Jesus*, the crucified *Jesus*, is his only Son, the very Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person; I say, for them to be told such strange Stories, must needs create a very strong Aversion to

Christi-

SER. M. *Christianity*; especially, since they could
 VII. not entertain the Belief of it, without con-
 demning themselves, and their Forefathers,
 of stupid Ignorance, and gross Idola-
 try.

AND yet in Spight of Prejudice, the Do-
 ctine of *Christ* did triumphantly prevail
 over many, that were the most zealous,
 and learned *Professors* among the *Jews*, and
 the most inquisitive *Philosophers* among the
Heathens. Such for Instance was *St. Paul*,
 himself once a Persecuter; and *Apollos* a
 Man mighty, and eloquent among the for-
 mer; and of the latter Kind, was *Diony-
 sius* the *Areopagite*; and in after Times,
Justin Martyr, *Athenagoras*, *Tertullian*,
 and others. But

Secondly, ANOTHER great Obstacle that
 oppos'd itself to the *Gospel* of *Christ*, was
 the Prevalency of Vice, which being the
 first Occupier of Mens Hearts, made them
 averse to the sacred Truth. For as Men
 are naturally apt to be too indulgent to
 their Lusts, and too passionately fond of
 sensual Satisfactions, and worldly Pleasures;
 so the *Gospel* was like to be no palatable
 Doctrine, no welcome Proposal to such
 distem-

distemper'd Souls. A Doctrine that taught SERM.
VII.
Men to *deny all Ungodliness, and worldly
Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and
godly in this present World.* A Doctrine,
that requir'd them to curb their most
craving Appetites, to renounce their dar-
ling Inclinations, to deny themselves the
most desirable Enjoyments; and if the
Providence of God should call them to it,
to submit to the extremest Hardships, and
Sufferings; and all upon a distant Prospect
of a future Reward. Hard Sayings these
no Doubt, to the Worldling, and Sensualist;
and yet the *Gospel* triumph'd still, and
wrought wonderful Changes in this Kind
of Men; and this is an Observation that
the Antients are very full of. *Origen* in
particular, takes Notice that the Converts
to *Christianity* were transform'd into new
Men, and restor'd from the very Sink of
all Corruption and Impurity, to the Pra-
ctice of Sobriety, and Continence, and a
grave, and regular Behaviour.

AND *Lactantius* to magnify the Power
of God's Word, makes the Challenge to all
that had a Mind to try the Experiment,
to see if the Effect would not answer. And
we

SERM. we meet with frequent Accounts of some
 VII. of tenderest Age, and Sex, that have en-
 dur'd the Extremity of Torture, for the
 Heb. xi. Name of *Christ*, even not accepting a De-
 35. liverance.

Thirdly, ANOTHER Obstacle that stood in the Way of the *Gospel*, at its first Entrance into the World, was Interest, the great *Diana*, that all the World is too prone to worship. And to be sure, where any Religion, be it *Judaism*, or *Paganism*, is the establish'd Religion of a Countrey, it must carry its secular Advantages along with it, and engage a great many in Point of Interest to adhere to it, against all Opposers. And when Gain is, as it were, an Appurtenance of Religion, it must needs be a very difficult Task to persuade Men to renounce their Faith, and the precious Fruits of it at once. Such an Attempt will be sure to be *withstood* with all the angry Zeal imaginable, by every *Demetrius*, and the whole Company of such devout Craftsmen. And yet the *Christian* Religion, though it propos'd no less than the utter Abolition, both of the *Jewish*, and the *Pagan* Worship, surmounted this

this great Difficulty, and induced great Numbers of Men of both those Professions, to quit, together with their hereditary Religion, their nearest Dependences, and their dearest Interests. For we read in the very Infancy of the Church, that *all those that believ'd* (which were then about three thousand Souls) *had all Things in Common*, Acts ii. 44, 45. and *sold their Possessions and Goods, and parted them to all Men, as every Man had need.* And though such were the Exigencies of those Times, that Christianity could not have subsisted without this charitable Provision; yet we find that Multitudes embrac'd it notwithstanding; and were well contented to submit to the Condition, even to *sell what they had, and lay the Price at the Apostle's Feet.* Acts iv. 35. Nay, we find that a great Company of the Priests, those that were Partakers with the Altar, and liv'd of the Sacrifice, were early Converts to the Faith. And we are told, *that many of them which used curious Arts brought their Books together, and burned them before all Men.* Acts xix. 19. And they counted the Price of them, and found it fifty thousand Pieces of Silver. So mightily (as the Text with some

SERM. of Admiration adds) *grew the Word*

VII. *God, and prevailed; even over potent Interest. And Ecclesiastical History informs us of many Persons of Note, and Eminence; who, in After-times chearfully parted with all their Honours, Preferments, and Advantages to take up a Religion that oblig'd them to be poor in Spirit.*

Fourthly, ANOTHER grand Obstacle to the Progress of the Gospel was Power. The Power, that is of the civil Sword, whetted by Zeal and Bigotry, and wielded by Rage and Cruelty. And this produc'd such a violent Shower of Blood (when Christianity was yet but an Infant Plant) as was enough in all humane Probability to tear it up by its tender Roots; and drown it in Destruction. But it fell out quite contrary: For after the Martyrdom of St. Stephen, when Persecution began to rage at Jerusalem; and Saul was making Havock in the Church: This was so far from hindring the Propagation of the Christian Faith, that it providentially help'd it forwards; for upon this Occasion we are inform'd, that they that were scatter'd abroad, went every where preaching the Word.

And

And when *Herod* murder'd *James*, and im-
prison'd *John*, and began to play his wick-
ed Pranks; the next *News* we hear of him
is, that *he was eaten of Worms*, and gave
up the Ghost; but the Word of God grew,
and multiplied. And when the *Heathen*
Emperors, levell'd their murdering *Edicts*
against the Lives of the poor *Christians*,
and one Persecution follow'd upon the
Neck of another; this cruel Effusion of
Blood, was but as a timely Watering to
God's Church, that made it still more
flourishing, and fruitful. And 'tis amazing
to consider, with what Earnestness they
courted Martyrdom, and with what Ala-
cricity, and Constancy they underwent it;
aged Fathers forgot the Infirmary of their
Years, and delicate Matrons, and tender
Virgins the Softness of their Sex, and Con-
stitution, and submitted to the Fury of the
Tormentors, as patiently in a Manner, as
the Anvil does to the Hammer, which
will sooner weary the strongest Arm, than
yield to the hardest Blow. And so per-
fectly victorious was this Faith over all
worldly Powers, and temporal Considera-
tions, that even the Executioners them-

SERM.

VII.

Acts xii.
21, 22.

S E R M.

VII.



selves in doing their Office, were sometimes made immediate Converts, and ready to become the next Sufferers. These, and such as these, were the Difficulties, which *Christianity* had to grapple with, in its Infant-State; and which it openly triumph'd over.

AND who were the Men, under whose Care, and Conduct all these mighty Things were accomplish'd? Who were they that preach'd the *Gospel* so persuasively and powerfully, so successfully under all these Disadvantages, and against all this combin'd Opposition? A Stranger to the *History* would imagine no less, than that they were Men of a superior Genius, great Masters of Learning, well skill'd, and practis'd in the Laws of Dispute, and all the Arts of *Rhetorical* Persuasion, and Insinuation. In a Word, cunning Managers, and dexterous Shifters, that knew how to improve all Advantages, and to make the best of every Disappointment; and that so by Degrees they weather'd the Point, and gain'd *Christianity* a peaceable Possession in the World.

BUT

BUT no such Matter, they were plain, honest Men, brought up to mean Employments, not polish'd with Letters, nor vers'd in Politics, nor buoy'd up with any Interest, nor help'd out with any Art. No! all these Advantages were thrown into the opposite Scale; and yet the Weight, and Moment of the Truths they deliver'd, and the peculiar, and powerful Demonstration with which they were taught, immediately turn'd the Balance; and *so mightily grew the Word of God, and prevail'd*; that it could not be check'd, or resisted, but indeed every vain Attempt of retarding it, prov'd a wonderful Furtherance to it. And even taking Things in this View, before we proceed to consider how the Word was confirm'd by Signs following; verily, this itself is a Sign of the invincible Power of divine Truth, that in its native Simplicity, it should prevail over Nature, Art, and Force, all combin'd together against it.

A MOST illustrious Testimony this, to the Mission, and Doctrine of *Christ*; such as, if other Miracles had been wanting, could have pass'd for no less than miracu-

SERM.
VII.

lous. And since the *Christian* Religion is so well founded in Truth, and supported by such convincing, and such astonishing Evidence; surely they, who can find in their Hearts at this Time of Day, to disbelieve it, or to entertain the least Doubt of it; must be more obstinate than the *Jews* of Old, more stupid than the very *Heathens*, who blinded, as they were, by Lust, and Prejudice, could not long resist the dazzling Light of it. And as for us, who think, and have Reason to think ourselves well establish'd in the Belief of our holy Religion, happy were it for us, if we were equally confirm'd in the habitual Practice of it; we, that know the Things, happy were it for us, if we were equally dispos'd to do them. Then would the Word of God increase, and multiply in our Hearts, and bring forth Fruit unto Life everlasting. Then, as sure as the Things we believe are true, so sure should we be, of *attaining the End of our Faith, even the Salvation of our Souls.* Which God grant, &c.

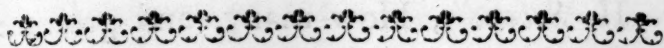
1 Pet. i. 9

S E R M O N



S E R M O N V I I I .

Of the swift Progress of the Gospel.



ACTS xix. 20.

*So mightily grew the Word of God,
and prevailed.*

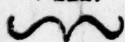


Y the *Word of God*, 'tis obvious, we are here to understand the *Gospel* preach'd, and propagated, as the Text intimates, with mighty Success, by the *Apostles* of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. S E R M .
V I I I .

R 4

Which

SERM.
VIII.



WHICH being a Thing in all its Circumstances so very wonderful, and in its true Construction, and Use, so strong a Confirmation to our *Christian* Faith; I thought it might not be improper, and I hop'd it would not be unsatisfactory, if I should set it before you in a full Light; and to this End I propos'd,

I. *First*, To enquire into the Fact itself, what the Growth of the *Gospel* was, and how much it prevail'd upon its first Planting by the *Apostles*.

II. *Secondly*, How many, and great the Difficulties were, over which it did prevail. And

III. *Thirdly*, WHAT that superior Power was, by which it thus encreas'd, and flourish'd, and became so mightily, so wonderfully prevalent in the World.

I. As to the *First* Enquiry, it has already appear'd, that the *Gospel* upon its first Planting, took rooting apace, and grew prodigiously, and multiplied by the Accession of three thousand Souls at one Sermon; and soon after, of five thousand more,

more, and so on in vast Proportions, wherever the *Apostles* came, both among *Jews*, and *Gentiles*. This is plainly to be seen in the *Acts* of *St. Peter*, and *St. Paul*, and their Fellow-labourers, which stand recorded in holy Writ. And it may justly be presum'd, that the Care, and Pains of the other *Apostles*, were blest with equal Success. And this is sufficiently confirm'd, both by the Confession of *Heathen Writers*, and the Boasts of the *Christian Apologists*; the first of which, we find complaining, and that very early, of the spreading Contagion of the *Christian Sect*, and the great Numbers of those, that resolutely adher'd to it; whilst the latter rejoice, and glory as much in its Prosperity, and Increase; and even vie (as *Tertullian* at least did in his Time) for the Majority in almost every City.

II. As to the *Second Enquiry*, it has also appear'd, that the Difficulties which *Christianity* had to grapple with, even in its Infant-state, were exceeding many, and great; no less than a Combination of all
the

SERM the inveterate Prejudices of *Jews*, and
 VIII. *Heathens*, all the darling Lusts, and Vices
 of a degenerate World, all the Baits, and
 Allurements of temporal Interest; and all
 the Force, and Fury of the secular Pow-
 ers, and all the Malice, and Machina-
 tions of Men, and Devils. All these were
 to be encounter'd by a few plain, simple
 Men, without the Advantages of Learn-
 ing or Education, without the Arts of Po-
 licy, or Address, without the Supports of
 Wealth, or Power. And these very Men
 unprovided, unarm'd as they were, and
 unable as they seem'd to be, vanquish'd all
 this sturdy Opposition; preach'd the *Gos-
 pel* victoriously, made their Enemies their
 Converts, Captives to *Christ*, and Martyrs
 for him. Of all which we have ample
 Information, from sacred, and *Ecclesiasti-
 cal* Story.

AND indeed, the Success, and Progress
 of the *Gospel*, was so prodigious, and a-
 mazing; that the very Admiration which
 it raises, would naturally put us upon that
 Enquiry, which I have reserv'd for the
 Subject of this Discourse, *viz.*

III. *Thirdly,*

III. *Thirdly*, WHAT that superior Power was, by which the *Gospel* became so mightily, so wonderfully prevalent in the World.

THIS is an Enquiry I say, the Wonderfulness of the Thing would naturally lead us to, if we were Strangers to the History. And, as we are *Christians*, the true Resolution of it, will afford us equal Satisfaction, and Profit.

THE Question then being this, by what Power the *Gospel* did at first prevail: It must have been either by some Power that was humane, or by such as was diabolical, or by such as was truly, and eminently divine. And, if upon Examination it shall appear, that it could not be by the first, nor yet by the second, then the Conclusion will abide firm, that by the third it must be, even by a Power incontestably divine. To proceed then, I shall prove.

First, THAT it could not be by any Power that was merely humane; because it was by Means quite out of Man's Ability, and in a Method quite contrary to the Course of humane Affairs; and yet the Cause prosper'd nevertheless, but indeed

SERM. deed so much abundantly the more against
 VIII. all Probability, and in Spite of all Opposi-
 ~~~~~ tion.

HUMANLY Speaking, the learnedest Advocate, and the subtlest Arguer will get the better of his Adversaries; the plausiblest Speaker will win most upon his Hearers, the cunningest Manager that lures Men by their Inclinations, and draws them in by the Hook of Interest, will gain over most to his Party, especially if he has it in his Power to back his Persuasion, if it should prove too weak, with the strong Argument of Compulsion.

BUT the *Apostles* of *Jesus Christ* were a quite different Sort of Men, and took other Kind of Measures, in preaching the *Gospel*, and converting Unbelievers.

As for Learning, they had little or none among them, except what fell to *St. Paul's* Share; and that he disclaim'd too, and neglected, when once he was called to be an *Apostle*, for then *he determin'd* (as he tells us himself) to *know nothing* (as thinking nothing worth knowing) *save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

i Cor. ii.  
 2.

AND

AND this strange Doctrine, so unplaufible in itfelf, he and his Brethren taught in the moft plain, artlefs Manner, and indeed to all Appearance, the moft difadvantageous, and the leaft likely to fucceed of any that could be thought of.

SERM.  
VIII.

THEY judg'd that it would depreciate the *Gospel*, and weaken its Authority, to ufe the *enticing Words of Men's Wisdom*, in its Defence, to prove it artificially by the Rules of Logick, or fet it forth ornamentally in Strains of Rhetoric. All this therefore they induftrioufly avoided, and contented themfelves to relate the naked Matter of Fact, that the crucified *Jesus* was, according to what he had himfelf foretold, rifen from the Dead, and afcended into Heaven, and having receiv'd of the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghofl, had fhed it forth upon them, and thereby enabled them all on the Sudden, without the Help of a Teacher, without any Study, or Premeditation of their own, to fpeak all Languages, (which is more than the perfeftest *Linguift* could attain to, by the moft affiduou, and laborious Application) and to work Signs, and Wonders by  
the



SERM. the Name of *Jesus*; to chase away Devils  
 VIII. at the Sound of it; to cure Diseases at  
 a Distance, by the healing Influence of a  
 Shadow in Passing, or the salutary Virtue  
 of Aprons, and Handkerchiefs, sent to  
 those that were sick. Strange Secrets these,  
 that all the learned Sons of *Æsculapius*, or  
 the *Adepti* in *occult Philosophy* could never  
 yet pretend to be Masters of: And there-  
 fore sure the Power must be more than  
 humane, by which these Things were ef-  
 fected.

AND the Truth of these Facts, those I  
 mean, which they reported of the Lord  
*Jesus*, they averr'd upon their own Know-  
 ledge, and with the utmost Assurance;  
 and for the astonishing Effects that were  
 wrought upon, or by themselves, they ap-  
 peal'd to the Eyes, and Ears of Multitudes  
 of their Enemies, in whose Presence they  
 were done. And the Doctrine that they  
 rais'd upon this Foundation, was directly  
 Acts ii. 36. this; that the same *Jesus* whom the Jews  
 had crucified, was both Lord, and Christ:  
 And the only Name under Heaven among  
 Men, whereby they might be saved. And  
 Acts ii. 38. therefore that they ought to repent, and be  
 baptiz'd

baptiz'd every one in his Name, for the Re-  
mission of their Sins. SERM.  
VIII.

AND yet to induce Men to believe in him, they did not think fit to conceal that he was despis'd, and rejected, whilst he liv'd, and died a most ignominious Death; so far were they from endeavouring to conceal it, that they proclaim'd it aloud, as if it had been the chief Recommendation of him, and his Doctrine; and attributed that Salvation, of which they brought the Tidings, solely to the Blood of his Cross.

THIS they knew would be Matter of Scandal to the *Jews*, and of Scorn to the *Greeks*; and yet they still insisted on it, and pressed it upon their Belief, without any Kind of softning Introduction, or Insinuation; and indeed with a Plainness, and Bluntness, that was rather like to give Offence, and create Prejudice.

THEY cast it in the Teeth of the *Jews*, that they had always been a *stiff-neck'd Generation*, that their *Fathers* had been the *Persecutors* of the *Prophets* in old Time, and they the *Betrayers*, and *Murderers* of that *just One*, the Prince of Life, and the only begotten Son of God, when  
he

SERMON. he came into the World. A Method, one  
 VIII. would think, that with such obstinate  
 Tempers, should be rather apt to pro-  
 voke, than persuade: And so it frequently  
 did; for we read, that *when they heard  
 these Things, they were cut to the Heart,  
 and gnash'd upon St. Stephen with their  
 Teeth:* And when St. Paul urg'd them with  
 the same at *Antioch*, they were moved with  
 Envy, and contradicted, and blasphem'd.

Act vii.  
 54.

Acts xiii.  
 45.

Acts xvii.  
 22, 23.

AND the *Apostles* were as plain, and  
 blunt with the *Gentiles*, as the *Jews*.  
 St. Paul told the *Athenians* to their Faces;  
*that they were too superstitious in all Things;*  
*that they ignorantly worshipp'd they knew  
 not whom.* And yet at the same Time, he  
*seem'd to them to be a setter forth of strange  
 Gods, because he preach'd unto them Jesus,  
 and the Resurrection;* and taught them to  
 worship a crucified Saviour.

A VERY unsuitable Object, as it must  
 appear to the superficial Judgment of Men,  
 for their Adoration, and as unfitting a Pat-  
 tern for their Imitation. And yet this is  
 a Point too, that the *Apostles* chiefly la-  
 bour'd to persuade Men (that is) not only  
 to believe in *Christ*, but to be his Follow-  
 ers;

ers; to follow him in the most rugged, and least trodden Paths of Virtue, in his Humility, his Meekness, his Purity, his Charity, his Peaceableness, his Patience, and Resignation; to *pluck out their right Eyes; to cut off their right Hands*; to part with all that was nearest, and dearest to them, most useful, or desirable; their Possessions, and Enjoyments, their Relations, and their very Lives, (if Need should be) in Hopes to find them again, in Futurity; and to be *rais'd to Glory*, as *Christ was*.

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VIII.

AND these harsh Conditions were nakedly propos'd, without Palliation, or Disguise. So far from that, that St. Paul openly glories, and triumphs in his Sufferings, and sets them forth in a Catalogue at large; as if this had been the best Encouragement that could be given, the fittest Topic of Consolation, that could be made use of, to the *Corinthian* Converts. Nay, he refers the *Hebrews*, even to their own Experience, as if the Memory of their past Sufferings had some cordial Virtue in it to support their Spirits under the Apprehensions of more to ensue.

Call to Re-  
membrance

Heb. x.  
32, &c.



SERM. *membrance* (says he) the former Days, in  
 VIII. which after ye were illuminated, ye endured  
 a great Fight of Afflictions, partly whilst ye  
 were made a gazing Stock, both by Re-  
 proaches, and Afflictions; and partly whilst  
 ye became Companions of them that were so  
 us'd. For ye had Compassion of me in my  
 Bonds, and took joyfully the Spoiling of your  
 Goods, knowing in yourselves, that ye have  
 in Heaven, a better, and an enduring Sub-  
 stance. Cast not away therefore your Confi-  
 dence, which hath great Recompence of Re-  
 ward. For ye have need of Patience, that  
 after ye have done the Will of God, ye may  
 receive the Promise.

HARD Sayings these! hard to be digest-  
 ed by Flesh and Blood, or to be reconcil'd  
 to Sense, or Feeling! And yet this was all  
 the Armour the *Apostles*, and *primitive*  
*Christians* had, to oppose against the bar-  
 barous Rage of their inhumane Persecu-  
 tors. And with this Furniture (seemingly  
 so slender) they made a gallant Resistance;  
 they bore up against cruel Oppression,  
 they grew under the Mower's Hands, fa-  
 ster than the Sithe of Destruction could cut  
 them down. They multiplied by their  
 Dimi-

Diminution, they robbed the Bear of her SERM. VIII.  
*Whelps*, even whilst they were worried by her; and took the greatest Spoils, when they suffer'd the greatest Violence.

AND though the Church of God passed through the Furnace of Persecution ten Times over; yet it came out still unhurt, and not only so, but with a Form more bright, and beautiful, as of the true Spouse of *Christ*, and with a Womb more fruitful, as of the joyful Mother of Children without Number.

AND that it might be visible to the whole World, that the Propagation of *Christianity*, was neither the Counsel, nor the Work of mere Men; Providence wisely so order'd it, that the Church had no Protection, nor Privilege, hardly any Respite, or Forbearance from the civil Powers, 'till such Time as the Profession of the *Christian* Faith had already made its Way into the Court, and the Camp, the Cities, and the Provinces, and almost over-spread the whole *Empire*, in Spite of the strictest Prohibition, and the fiercest Opposition. So entirely independent was it upon any

SER M. Thing, the Might of Man could do, either to help, or to hinder it.

VIII.

AND now upon the whole Matter, since the Simplicity of the *Gospel* was more convincing than all the Subtlety of its Opposers, and its Weakness more cogent than all their Force; since the Rudeness of Speech, which the *Apostles* us'd, was more persuasive than the most eloquent, and plausible Harangues; since the unpopular Doctrine that they taught, was embrac'd by vast Multitudes, against the *Current* of Prejudice, Custom, and Prescription; against the strong Bent, both of vitious Inclination, and even natural Propensity, with Forfeiture of all their present Ease, and Interest, and at the Hazard, and Expence of their dearest Lives; since the Boldness of the *Apostles* (Men otherwise timorous enough) was so perfectly undaunted in confessing the *Lord Jesus*, and their Patience so invincible, in suffering for him: To conclude, since the copious Variety of Languages, which unstudied, and untaught, they spoke so fluently, were indeed unattainable by any Study, or Industry; and the wonderful Works that they wrought, were

were really inimitable by any Skill, or Art S E R M. VIII. of Man; it must be granted, that by what Power soever the *Gospel* prevail'd, it could not be merely humane. But

*Secondly*, MIGHT it not be (may *Infidelity* say) by some *diabolical* Power? For the *Devil* is a subtle, and an active Being, that is able to do many Things, which far exceed all the Abilities, Contrivance, and Comprehension of Men: And is it not possible, that he might employ the *Apostles*, as his Instruments, and enable them, the better to recommend them to the World, to work some such strange Feats, as might surprize, and amuse the Beholders, and appear to them truly wonderful, and unaccountable?

THIS indeed was the malicious Cavil of the *Scribes*, and *Pharisees*, against our *Saviour*, that he cast out *Devils* by *Beelzebub*, Mat. xii. 24. the *Prince of Devils*. And it was after- Luke xi. 15. wards a blasphemous Suggestion of some vile *Apostates*, that he, and all his Followers were but a Parcel of *Sorcerers*, and *Magicians*, and that they were not unsuccessfully rivall'd by *Simon Magus*, *Apollo-nius*, and others.



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IN Answer to which last impudent Pretence, it were easy to shew, that most of the Miracles suppos'd to be wrought by such Kind of *Juglers*, are but lamely attested at best, or rather justly to be suspected of Falshood in the Relater, or Imposture in the Performer; and that all of them, if true, are but very inconsiderable; and of no Signification, or Moment, when once they come to be compar'd with those much greater, and more stupendous ones recorded in the Scripture.

BUT this, not falling so directly within the Compass of my present Design, I shall not now further insist on it. I shall only content myself to prove (what I think also will be sufficient to silence all Gain-sayers) that the Miracles which our *Saviour* himself perform'd, or empower'd his *Disciples* to perform, by Way of Attestation to their Commission, and Confirmation to their Doctrine; can, upon no Account be ascrib'd to any *diabolical* Power; whether we consider the Nature of the Works themselves, or the Manner in which they were done, or the End at which they aim'd, and the Effect that they had. And

*First,*

First, THE very Nature of the Works SERM. VIII.  
 themselves, those at least that were the  
 most remarkable of them will help to e-  
 vince this.

FOR though it may perhaps be granted,  
 that the *Devil* by his Insight into natural  
 Causes, or his Dexterity in applying them  
 in some unusual Manner, may be able to  
 effect such real Wonders, as far surpass all  
 the Activity, Invention, and Conception of  
 us Men; yet it can never be allow'd, that  
 he has an absolute, and unlimited Power;  
 because that would make him equal in  
 Power to God himself, which were both  
 absurd, and impious once to imagine.

Now, I think, 'tis sufficiently apparent,  
 that some of those most mighty Works that  
 were perform'd by our *Saviour*, and his  
*Apostles*, are such, as nothing less than an  
 absolute, and unlimited Power could ac-  
 complish.

FOR Instance, as I take it; to supersede  
 the Use of second Causes, and to cure  
 Diseases, incurable by natural Means,  
 without any Means at all, or none that  
 could be conducive to the Purpose; by a  
 single Word, by a transient Touch, by the

S E R M. Touch of a *Garment*, or *Apron*, or the  
 VIII. Influence of a Shadow; I say, these are  
 Works, that plainly bespeak the Interpo-  
 sition of an *omnipotent* Power; at least,  
 'tis plain, that *Omnipotence* itself could not  
 act more absolutely, and independently in  
 alike Case; and therefore we may well con-  
 clude, that it must be Omnipotence, that  
 thus acts in a Manner only becoming itself,  
 and that no inferior, to be sure, no oppo-  
 site Power would be permitted so far to  
 vie with God, and his Attributes.

BUT without all Dispute, that most  
 stupendous *Miracle* of all others, the re-  
 storing Life to the Dead, which was also  
 crown'd by the Resurrection of our Lord  
 himself; upon which the *Apostles* build, as  
 their main Foundation: This, I say, could  
 be atchiev'd by no less than the omnipo-  
 tent Hand of God.

FOR to restore Life, is equivalent to the  
 giving of Life, and to give Life is the  
 proper Act of a Creator, such an Act, as  
 no Creature, how potent soever, can be  
 capable of doing by any inherent Power  
 of his own; and therefore not of the *De-  
 vil* himself. And it may well be conclu-  
 ded,

ded, though we had no other Reason so to think; that 'tis perfectly out of the Verge of his Power, because he never did attempt any such Thing, that any credible *History* informs us of; which yet it may be presum'd, he would have done, if he could; had it been only to weaken the Force of this main Fundamental of the *Christian Religion*, and to discredit the Doctrines grounded thereupon.

AND 'tis observable, that the antient *Apologists* are willing to put the Cause upon this very Issue, and stop the Mouths of such calumnious Objectors, as ascrib'd the Miracles of *Christ*, and his *Apostles* to some *magic Art*, or *satanical Delusion*; boldly challenging them, and all their Adherents, to produce any *Magician*, that ever did the thousandth Part of what these Men did, or who could do (not the mighty Deeds that Scripture mentions) but even the most inconsiderable Things that can be imagin'd, even cure a *Fellon*, or a *Tetter*, or draw out a *Thorn* by a Word of Command; which is pursued with a great deal of Eloquence, and Smartness by *Arnobius*.

'Tis

SERM.  
VIII.

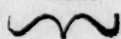


SERM.  
VIII.

'TIS further observable,

*Secondly*, THAT as the Works themselves were such, as can hardly be thought feasible to any *diabolical* Power, and were never known to be done by any such; so the Manner of performing them, was contrary to the Use, and Practice of the *Dealers* in *Magic*, and such impious Arts. They were done not slyly, and clancularly, but openly, and fairly in the Presence of Multitudes, without any mysterious Ceremonies, or Preparations to amuse, and prepossess their Fancies, or impose upon their Senses; not by muttering over a few barbarous unintelligible Words, or calling for the Aid of infernal Spirits: But with an Appearance of great Gravity, and Sincerity, and unaffected Devotion, express'd in Prayer to the true God; and the religious, and awful *Invocation of the Name of Jesus*; in Virtue of whose sacred Name alone, they were effected, and not (as *Irenæus* notes) by that of *Simon*, or *Menander*, or *Carpocrates*, or any of those cunning Practitioners, and Factors for the Devil; and therefore it would be highly unreasonable, and injurious, to ascribe them to the *Devil*.

*Thirdly*,



*Thirdly*, BUT moreover this will be indisputably clear, from the End, at which these miraculous Works aim'd, and the Effect which they obtain'd; for the direct Aim, and Tendency was to establish, the Belief, and Worship of one supreme God; to bear authentic Testimony to the *Revelation* of his Will, and to introduce a rational Religion, to enforce the Precepts of Holiness, of Justice, of Charity, and Purity, to confound the *Devil*, and all his Works; to overthrow the Kingdom of Darkness, to expose the Folly, and Fallacy, by which it was supported; to root out all Superstition, and Idolatry, and the gross Impieties, and Impurities, with which they were accompanied. In a Word, to drive the unclean Spirits from the usurp'd Possession of Mens Souls, and Bodies, and to dislodge them from their *Temples* too, and all their dark Holes, and Corners. And the Effect prov'd every Way answerable to the Design; for a speedy Reformation, and a thorough Purgation soon ensued. Men were moulded into Principles, and Practices entirely new; the Name, the Doctrine, the Laws of *Christ* were

SERM. were own'd, and submitted to; and Satan  
 VIII. instantly fell as Lightning from Heaven;  
 Luke x. his Tyranny was at an End, his Oracles  
 18. were struck dumb, and his Sacrifices ceas'd;  
 He, and all his *Angels* were so subject, e-  
 ven to the meanest *Christian*, that their ve-  
 ry Presence, as the *Apologists* scruple not to  
 boast, mov'd them into a Confession, that  
 they were no Gods, but very *Devils*, (an  
 Experiment, upon the Success of which,  
*Tertullian* boldly stakes his own, or any  
 Christian's Life.)

His finest Feats of Activity were mani-  
 festly outdone; his lying Wonders detect-  
 ed; his curious Arts of Exorcisms, Spells,  
 and Incantations baffled, and those that  
 practis'd them converted, as we read in  
 this Chapter. And *Simon* the *Samaritan*,  
 that *Arch-Conjurer*, and *Impostor* dismount-  
 ed (as \* *Arnobius* relates) from his fiery  
 Chariot, by a Word of *St. Peter*; and in-  
 stead of flying into *Heaven*, as he vainly  
 pretended, breaking both his Legs by his  
 Fall, and afterwards perishing miserably.

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\* *Libr. contra Gentiles.*

AND St. *Chrysostom* in his Time, confidently affirms, and appeals to the Knowledge of many living Witnesses for the Truth of it; that the famous Oracle of *Daphne* was silenc'd, as *Apollo* himself, when urg'd to it confess'd, by a dead Martyr's Bones; by which it seems the Place was polluted, but the Fiend plainly confounded.

Now that which I would infer from these Instances is this; 'tis certain, the Devil is not so raw a *Politician*, but that he knows, *That no Kingdom divided against it self can stand*: And therefore could he work Miracles never so many, and great, he would not employ his Instruments to act counter to each other; he would not commission them to work any for the promoting true Religion, and Virtue; to be sure he would not distinguish any Miracle, that had a Tendency that Way, by the evident Marks of a superior, and controuling Power; he would so far discountenance, and discourage those his Agents, that are most peculiarly devoted to his own Service; he would not contribute so much to his own Disgrace, and perform a studied Part so  
incon-



S E R M. inconsistent with his Nature, Design, and  
 VIII. Interest. And consequently, unless Light,  
 and Darkneſs be all one; Piety, and Im-  
 piety the ſame Thing, the Miracles up-  
 on the Credit of which the *Gospel* came  
 warranted, and recommended, can up-  
 on no Terms be imputed to a *diabolical*  
 Power.

III. *Thirdly*, IT remains therefore in the  
*third*, and *laſt* Place, that the Power by  
 which the *Gospel* ſo mightily, ſo wonder-  
 fully prevail'd, muſt be truly, and emi-  
 nently *divine*.

IT was *the Demonſtration of the Spirit,*  
*and of Power* (as St. Paul calls it) that  
 outshone all other Evidence, and conclu-  
 ded ſo forcibly for the Truth of *Chriſtia-*  
*nity* againſt all Gainſayers, and Oppoſers.  
 1 Cor. ii. The *Demonſtration of the Spirit, and of*  
 4. *Power*, I ſay; that is, as I take it, a Com-  
 pletion of *Prophecies* by *Miracles*, and a  
 mutual Confirmation of each by other;  
 which is the moſt evident, and infallible  
 Mark, that can be, of the divine Wiſdom,  
 and Power, equally intereſting itſelf in ſuch  
 Events. For if it be expreſsly foretold, that  
 ſuch

such a Person, so qualified, and describ'd, shall, in a certain Period of Time, but after many Ages, arise, and work such and such astonishing *Wonders*, far transcending the Skill, or Force of Men, or *Devils*; and if the Person exactly answering to this Description, do accordingly arise, and fulfil the Prediction, by the undoubted Performance of those very Wonders: And if the same Person shall undertake himself to foretel, other and greater Miracles to be accomplish'd, after his Decease, but in his Name, and by his Power, and this also be verified in the Event; and if the whole Design of this Person's coming into the World, appears at the same Time, to be every Way right worthy of God; and the Doctrine that he teaches has all the plain Characters of intrinsic Truth, and Goodness; I say, when there is a signal Concurrence of all these important Circumstances, it most evidently shews, that the Prescience, and Omnipotence of God, are jointly concern'd in the whole Scheme, and with a direct Intention to do Honour to the Person so distinguish'd, and to give Weight,

SERM. Weight, and Authority to all his Words,  
VIII. and Actions.

Now this is undeniably the Case of our Lord, and Saviour Jesus Christ, and he himself asserts his own Dignity, and Commission, upon the Strength of this very Argument. For *when John sent two of his Disciples, with this Question; Art thou he that should come* (meaning the Messiah) *or do we look for another?* His Reply was; *Go your Way, and tell John what Things ye have seen, and heard; how that the Blind see, the Lamæ walk, the Lepers are cleansed, the Deaf hear, the Dead are rais'd, and to the Poor the Gospel is preach'd;* directly referring to the Prophecy of *Isaiah*, wherein these very Things are foretold.

Mat. xi.  
3, 4, 5.

If. xxxv.  
5, 6.

AND as he was a Worker of Miracles, and shew'd upon many Occasions, an absolute Empire over Nature; so he was a most eminent Prophet, and foretold the most wonderful, and *astonishing* Events, as *astonishingly* fulfill'd. He foretold his own Death, and Resurrection, and he arose accordingly from the Dead on the third Day; he foretold his own Ascension into Heaven,

ven, and visibly ascended after forty Days; S E R M.  
 he foretold the Mission of the *Holy Ghost*, VIII.  
 which was exhibited in that unheard-of  
 Gift of Tongues, conferr'd on the *Apostles*;  
 not in the ordinary Way of Conveyance,  
 but by the immediate Infusion, and Utter-  
 ance of the Spirit, that at once inspir'd  
 their Thoughts, and actuated their Organs;  
 enabling them all on the Sudden intelligi-  
 bly, and for that very Reason convincingly  
 to speak to the People of all Nations, and  
 Languages; he foretold, that besides o-  
 ther wonderful Works, they should be em-  
 power'd to confer, even this extraordinary  
 Gift upon others; a Commission that they  
 executed at Discretion, and with certain  
 Effect, as often as the Honour of their  
 Lord, and Advancement of his Religion  
 requir'd it.

HE foretold, that they should have Power  
 to cast out *Devils* in his Name; accordingly  
 they exerted a commanding, and controul-  
 ing Power over the *Devil*, and all his most  
 subtle, and powerful Agents. To this was  
 owing the sudden Stop that was put to the  
 Sorceries of *Simon*, whom the People from  
 the least to the greatest, regarded as the



SERM.

VIII.

great Power of God. But he beholding with Wonder the Miracles, and Signs that he could not imitate, in Pretence at least, became a Believer, and was baptiz'd, and under that Colour hop'd, upon an Offer of Money, to obtain the Power of conferring the *Holy Ghost*, by his own unhallow'd Hands: But he met with a peremptory Refusal in those Words of St. *Peter*, *Thy Money perish with thee, because thou hast thought, that the Gift of God may be purchas'd with Money.* But this impious, and blasphemous Thought, as it should seem by the Event, being not to be pardoned, he had Recourse in vain to his devilish Art, and perish'd in an Attempt to rival our *Lord's* Ascension, as was before noted from *Arnobius*. These Predictions, of which I have reminded you, were brought to pass within a short Space of Time, after they were deliver'd; and the *Notoriety* of the Facts was such, that they could not but fall under the Notice of the greatest Enemies, and Opposers of *Christ*, and his Religion; having the Apostles also for faithful Monitors, lest they should have been stupid enough to overlook them.

And

Acts viii.  
20.

And the Accomplishment of these Wonders, was a most signal Proof of a Power, and Wisdom far surpassing all that can be conceiv'd to belong to mere Man, or can with any Shadow of Reason be ascrib'd to the Devil; whose utmost Efforts were at the same Time visibly overpower'd, and all his Stratagems confounded.

It appears then I hope, by whose Help, and by what Means the *Word of God* from such unpromising Beginnings; grew so mightily, and so speedily prevail'd; over the unbelieving World: For it manifestly was carried on, in Opposition to the united Force, and cunning of Men, and Devils, by a Power eminently superior to both; and therefore most certainly divine. And now having, as I trust, made out what I propos'd, I shall conclude with a brief Reflection, or two upon the whole.

AND *First* it deserves to be reflected on, with just Wonder, and ought always to be esteem'd, as a most illustrious Testimony to the Truth of *Christianity*, that it should be propagated at first, with such incredible Success, and by Methods so very extraordinary, and peculiar. Which Cir-

S E R M  
VIII. cumstance alone (if no other Miracle had been wrought in Confirmation of the Gospel) would have pass'd for no less than miraculous. For it is certainly so, that a Doctrine so severe, and unacceptable to Flesh and Blood, so irreconcilable to the secular Interest, as well as corrupt Inclinations of Mankind, so violently oppos'd by all the Force, and Malice of Men, and Devils, should irresistibly persuade, both Jew and Gentile, and draw the whole World after it by Cords so strong, and yet so easy, without any Kind of outward Compulsion, without any Prospect of Advantage or Reward, except what was future, and invisible; but with the present, and visible Terror of the extremest Hardships, and Sufferings: This, I say, if all other Tokens had been wanting, must have been own'd to be the Effect of a Power truly *divine*. And hereby the *Christian* Religion stands remarkably distinguish'd, from all religious *Impostures*, whose Rise, and Growth have always manifestly been owing to the Plausibility, and Palatableness of the Doctrines taught, or to the Subtlety, and Artifice of the Teachers, or to the last,  
and

and strongest Arguments of a bad Cause, SERM. VIII.  
*Menace, and Coaction.* Such was the Introduction of *Mahometism* into the World, which is a Scheme of Religion compounded out of all other Religions, that it might recommend itself to some of all; and 'tis dress'd up with a good Deal of Art, and Cunning, and admirably suited to the Palates of the most sensual; and yet with all those plausible Coverings, it was forc'd to hew out its Way with the Sword, and it is supported to this Day by the same Method of Violence.

WHEREAS the *Christian* Religion stript of all these Advantages, and Aids, and clogg'd with all possible Disadvantages, and Impediments, found a Way unforc'd, and prevail'd by its own *native* Efficacy, and even by suffering baffled, and subdued all the boisterous Rage, and Cruelty of its most inveterate Enemies; so that we may well believe it, what it has distinguish'd itself to be, the *Power* of God, and the *Wisdom* of God.

*Secondly*, SINCE the *Gospel* has all along from the Beginning, *prevail'd so mightily*, and triumph'd so remarkably over all Opposition; we rely upon the same divine



SERM. Power and Wisdom, by which it hath been  
 VIII. hitherto supported, that it will still *prevail*,  
 still increase, and advance conquering, and  
 to conquer! For we may comfort ourselves  
 in this, that the *Christian* Faith hath already  
 been engaged in all Sorts of Conflicts, and  
 Trials, but always superior: Hath been op-  
 posed (but always in vain) by Arts, and  
 Arguments, and Artillery of all Sorts; so  
 that no modern *Engine* can now be plaid  
 upon us: No subtle Stratagem invented,  
 but what hath been antiently used, and  
 often baffled.

EVEN the Author that has made so  
 much Noise of late, under the abusive Ti-  
 tle, (*A Discourse of the Grounds, and Rea-  
 sons of the Christian Religion*) attempts in-  
 fidiously to weaken, undermine, and over-  
 turn its Foundation; even this Author  
 has advanced nothing, but what has been  
 heretofore urged, and often by his Prede-  
 cessors in *Infidelity*, and *Apostasy*; and as  
 often solidly answer'd, and silenc'd by as  
 able Advocates. In particular, the pre-  
 tended Misapplication of Texts cited in the  
*New Testament* from the *Old*, or their  
 Want of Pertinence to the Purpose, for  
 which

which they were alledged. This is a Matter that has been long since carefully consider'd, and judiciously accounted for by *Spanhemius*, and *Huetius*, who have learnedly proved by a perfect Induction of Particulars, that all the most remarkable *Prophecies* solely, or eminently relating to the *Messiah* expected, have been punctually verified in the *Jesus*, whom we believe. And what has this *famed Author* done? Has he refuted the judicious Accounts that have been hitherto so esteem'd? Has he invalidated the positive, and standing Proofs of the Completion of the *Prophecies*, by a regular, and rational Reply? No such Matter. Has he then put additional Strength into the old Objections? Not that neither. He has only steel'd them over with more Confidence, and pointed them with more Malice, and varnish'd them over with fresh Colours, and a venomous Mixture of such Suggestions, as favour rank of *Blasphemy*. He may delude himself, and others to Perdition, but the Cause of the Church of *Christ* can be in no Danger from his Attacks; for our *Saviour* himself has

SERM. told us, that *the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.*

VIII.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed as is due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

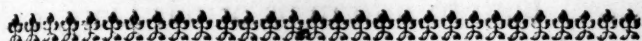


SERMON



# S E R M O N IX.

The Nature of Truth, and Falshood consider'd.



EPHES. iv. 35.

*Wherefore putting away Lying,  
speak every Man Truth with his  
Neighbour; for we are Members  
one of another.*



THE Text comprizes, *First*, a S E R M. IX.  
strict Prohibition of the detestable Practice of Lying, so  
familiar among the *Heathen* Greeks, that it was but necessary to warn  
the *Christian* Converts of it. *Secondly*, as  
strict



SERM. strict an Injunction of the contrary Virtue,  
 IX. called *Veracity*: And *Thirdly*, a very  
 weighty Reason to convince us, of our  
 Obligation hereunto; and to enforce it up-  
 on us; viz. our mutual Relation, and  
 Combination, not only as Men, and Citi-  
 zens, but above all as Christians. *Wherefore*  
*putting away Lying, speak every Man*  
*Truth with his Neighbour; for we are*  
*Members one of another.* From which  
 Words I shall speak to these several Points  
 following; which may be of Use (I con-  
 ceive) both to inform us of our Duty, and  
 to induce us to put it in Practice.

I. *First*, I SHALL enquire into the Na-  
 ture, and Formality of a Lye.

II. *Secondly*, I SHALL endeavour to dis-  
 cover, and lay open the Turpitude, and  
 Baseness of it in General; as also

III. *Thirdly*, THE particular Malignity of  
 most of the several Sorts of Lyes, that  
 commonly pass up and down, and make  
 Mischief in the World.

IV. *Fourthly*, I SHALL examine, whe-  
 ther all Lying be universally forbidden.

V. *Fifthly*,

V. *Fifthly*, WHETHER every Deviation S E R M.  
from Truth, does involve Men in the Im- IX.  
putation of a Lye, and is to be condem-  
ned as such. And then,

VI. *Sixthly*, and *Lastly*, How far we  
are obliged to keep to simple Truth, and  
declare it. And

I. *First*, I SHALL enquire into the Na-  
ture, and Formality of a Lye. But in or-  
der to clear my Way towards this, I must  
first premise; that Truth is a Debt, in  
which all Men (so far as every ones parti-  
cular Concern reaches) have a common,  
and indisputable Right. For the great  
Creator of all Things, imparted the Fa-  
culty of Speech to Mankind, and wisely  
suited it to our Nature and Condition, as  
sociable Creatures; to the End we might  
effectually reap the Advantages, and Com-  
forts of that Society we were framed for.  
And this devolves a respective Obligation  
upon all, to employ that excellent Gift to  
the End, and Purpose for which it was  
designed; and by making our Tongues the  
just, and clear Interpreters of our Minds,  
and truly representing our Thoughts to  
each

SERM. each other; to lay the Foundation of equal Commerce, and faithful Friendship; and all the interchangeable good Offices of Humanity, Justice, or Charity. And to this we must be necessarily, and indispensibly obliged; because if we could suppose ourselves at Liberty to speak one Thing, and mean another, or in any wise to disguise, and misrepresent our own Thoughts: That very Faculty which was given us for our mutual Help, and Benefit, would be turned into a fatal Instrument of Mischief, whereby to betray each other into Errors, and Snares, and all Manner of Inconveniences.

AND this will help us to discern, what the Nature of a Lye is: For as Truth preserves an exact Agreement betwixt the Thoughts, and Words; or at least never voluntarily creates any Mistake, or Misapprehension in the Hearer, which may turn to his Detriment, or that of any other Person; so a Lye is an Untruth, or a suppos'd Untruth, importing a Disagreement between the Speaker's Words, and Thoughts; and accompanied with a strong Tendency, if not a direct Intention to deceive, and injure

injure his Neighbour. This I take to be SERM.  
the Definition of a Lye; and according to IX.  
this Definition, the Matter of a Lye (you  
see) may be either an Untruth, or a sup-  
posed Untruth indifferently, as it shall hap-  
pen; but the Formality of it, ever con-  
sists, either in the evil Intention of the  
Speaker, or the evil Tendency of the  
Thing itself; *viz.* to deceive one's Neigh-  
bour to his Hurt.

AND this will evidently appear to be  
the Case upon the slightest Attention: For  
though Truth, and Falshood taken in the  
same Sense, be irreconcilable Opposites;  
yet this Opposition is no necessary Ingre-  
dient to make up a Lye: Because that  
which is true in Fact, may be a Lye, not-  
withstanding; as being contrary to the pre-  
sent Sentiments of the Speaker.

HE that utters a Falshood, thinking,  
and knowing it so to be, he manifestly en-  
deavours to impose upon his Neighbour's  
Belief; and that oftentimes to his very  
great Prejudice.

AND he that reports a Truth, not know-  
ing it to be so, but thinking it to be other-  
wise; does equally design to abuse his  
Neighbour;



SERM. Neighbour; and therefore he is every whit  
 IX. as disingenuous a Liar as the other, tho'  
 in Effect not always so mischievous.

So that Truth itself may, and does put on the formal Essence, and has all the vile Qualities of a Lye, when it is injuriously applied to the same wicked Purposes.

AND on the other Hand, Falshood has such a natural Aptness in most Cases to deceive, and by deceiving to injure People; that it cannot be acquitted of that Deceit, and Wrong, even when 'tis utter'd without any such direct Intention in the Speaker; or any such positive Effect upon the Hearer.

FOR he that makes himself the Reporter of what he knows, or thinks to be false, or does not know to be true; that Man notoriously misapplies the Use of Speech, in such a Manner, as may prove very detrimental to some Body or other. And if it should not, it is in no Sort owing however to any good Will of his; or any the least Regard to Truth, or Justice.

AND the Guilt of a Lye still rests upon him, though not in the same Degree, as if it had been directly set to Work upon

on Mischief, by deliberate Malice, and SERM.  
Contrivance. IX.

FOR he is a Liar, who being void of all that Tenderneſs, which he ought to have for his Neighbour's Good; relates ſuch Falshoods at all Adventures, as may probably redound to his Diſadvantage.

BUT he is a more malicious, and a more dangerous Lyar, who lies in Wait to deceive, and to defraud, and keeps his devilish Invention conſtantly employ'd about this very Thing.

IN one Word, the very Formality of a Lye, muſt at laſt conſiſt in an Intention, or Tendency (at leaſt) to deceive People, and to deceive them to their Hurt; which is a manifeſt Violation of one of the moſt fundamental Laws of our Nature, and a notorious Abufe of the natural Talent of Speech: Whereas the Falshood, or Fallacy that is not attended with any injurious Conſequence, either in the Intention of the Speaker, or the ordinary Courſe of Things, ſeems to be ſinleſs, as 'tis harmleſs; at leaſt I think, we muſt allow it ſo to be, when it is dexterouſly accommodated to the Benefit of the Perſon more immediately concern'd

SERM. cern'd in it, without any possible Wrong  
 IX. to any Body besides. For this is so far  
 from perverting the Use of Speech, that it  
 is in Effect to pursue the first Aim, and  
 Design of it, which was undoubtedly the  
 Help, and Comfort of those endow'd  
 with it.

AND therefore this Practice, (when the  
 Weight, and Urgency of the Case seems  
 to make it necessary) deserves not to incur  
 the Blame, nor to be branded with the  
 Infamy of Lying: For this is no wise in-  
 jurious, as a Lye always is, or at least is so  
 very apt to be; that its Injuriousness must  
 always make a Part of the Definition, and  
 help to constitute, and compleat its Es-  
 sence.

AND let so much satisfy at present for  
 the first Enquiry, concerning the Nature,  
 and Formality of a Lye; which I may  
 have occasion hereafter to confirm, both  
 from Reason, and Fact. In the mean  
 Time I proceed,

II. *Secondly*, To endeavour to discover,  
 and lay open the Turpitude, and Baseness  
 of a Lye in General; as also the particular  
 Malig-

Malignity of most of those several Sorts of S E R M.  
Lyes, that commonly pass up and down, IX.  
and make Mischief in the World.

AND the Turpitude, and Baseness of it  
in General, is sufficiently discoverable;  
*First*, From its Author the Devil; and its  
Hatefulness to God. *Secondly*, From the  
Company with which it is rank'd, and the  
Punishment with which it is threatned,  
in holy Scripture. *Thirdly*, From the de-  
served ill Opinion it has always had in the  
World. *Fourthly*, From the many ill Con-  
sequences that are owing to it. And *Fifthly*,  
Its absolute Inconsistency, with our mu-  
tual Relations, as Men, as Citizens, and  
Christians.

*First*, I SAY, its Turpitude is sufficiently  
discoverable, from its Author the Devil,  
(and its Hatefulness to God) as being his  
darling Offspring. For *he is a Lyar, and* John viii.  
*the Father of it; when he speaketh a Lye,* 44.  
*he speaketh of his own:* 'Tis his Talent, 'tis  
his very Nature: Nay 'tis the accursed  
Engine, with which he assailed, and over-  
threw the Integrity of our first Parents;  
and overwhelmed the World with Sin,  
and Misery. And therefore it must needs



SERM. be (as 'tis declared to be) an Abomination to

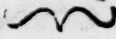
IX. God; the God of Love, who could not  
 lye to deceive his Creatures: The God of  
 Love who could take no Pleasure in their  
 Misery; but on the contrary, must be ter-  
 ribly incensed to see his own most just, and  
 gracious Purposes contradicted; blasphem-  
 ed, and opposed by an impudent Lye.  
 And surely the diabolical Original, and per-  
 nicious Effects, which render it so justly  
 odious to God; must give us a Sense of  
 the moral Turpitude that is in it; and if  
 we consider it, create an Abhorrence too.  
 But

*Secondly*, THE Company with which it  
 is ranked, and the Punishment with which  
 it is threatned in holy Scripture, will be a  
 farther Conviction to us. In the 3<sup>d</sup> Chap-  
 ter to the *Colossians*, we find, that *Anger*,  
*Wrath*, *Malice*, *Blasphemy*, *filthy Commu-  
 nication*, and *Lying* are put into the same  
 Catalogue; and equally indicted, as *Limbs*  
 of the *old Man*, with his Deeds. And it  
 is peremptorily denounced in the Revela-  
 tions, that the *Fearful*, and *Unbelieving*,  
*and Murderers*, and the *Abominable*, and  
*Whoremongers*, and *Sorcerers*, and *Idola-  
 ters*;

Ver. 8,  
 9, 10.

Chap. xxi.  
 8.

*ters, and all Lyars, or whosoever loveth, and maketh a Lye shall have their Part in the Lake, which burneth with Fire and Brimstone.* From whence we may, and ought indeed to infer; that, that Sin which is joined both in the Accusation, and Sentence with some of the most heinous Sins that are, is itself also very heinous.

S E R M.  
IX.  


*Thirdly,* THAT Men may for once be judg'd by themselves in this Case; we may fairly appeal to that deserv'd ill Opinion, which it has all along had in the World; for hardly any Character is so vile, and despicable in the general Esteem of Mankind, as that of a Lyar. It is what every Body pursues with the last Degree of Contempt in others, and rejects with the utmost Scorn, and Detestation, when taxed with it themselves; nay, the Imputation is held to be so gross and foul, that Men frequently think it worth the while to wash it off, with their own, or their Accuser's Blood; and rather than pass for Lyars, they take care to prove themselves Murderers. A very unfuitable Way indeed to express their Detestation of a Lye! But yet this which is but the unwarrantable

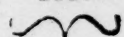
S E R M.

IX.

Practice of some, proceeds from the real, and well grounded Sense of all the rest; to wit, that Lying is of all others, a Practice the most infamous, and detestable. And the World I believe, would scarce so readily concur to set a Brand of Ignominy upon this single Vice, were it not, that the Moral Evil of it stares us full in the Face; and is too ugly to be overlook'd. But

*Fourthly,* If Men should still want to be made more sensible of this, from the Observation, and Experience of all Ages; I might refer them to the many ill Consequences, which are justly chargeable upon it. For most assuredly, there is hardly any other Sin against our Neighbour, that teems with more Mischief; or disturbs, and annoys humane Life more than this. It is a Sin that perverts the original Use of Speech, and thereby defeats the main Ends of Society, and undermines the very Foundation of all Tranquillity, and Safety in our several Possessions, Properties, and Rights. It abuses People's good Nature, and Credulity; and takes Advantage of their Candour. It makes bold with their

Repu-



Reputation, and sometimes basely attempts their very Innocence, and Life. It creates Misunderstandings in Families, and separates very Friends: It sows Diffensions in Neighbourhoods, and enkindles Jealousies in Kingdoms. In one Word, it breaks through all the strongest Bonds of Faith, and Honour; and invades all, that Men hold valuable, dear, or sacred: And the Tongue that is framed, and fashioned to it, *sets on Fire the whole Course of Nature*, Jam. iii. 6. *and is itself set on Fire of Hell.* And what a World of Iniquity must there be in that Practice, which makes such mad Havock abroad, and draws such a Train of ill Consequences after it.

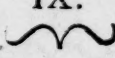
*Fifthly and Lastly*, As its Immorality is abundantly evident from what has been already said; so it is left perfectly without Excuse, in that it is so absolutely inconsistent with our mutual Relations, and Obligations, as Men, as Citizens, and as Christians.

AND this is the very Reason, why here we are so strictly enjoined; *to put away Lying, and speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour*, even because we are Mem-



SERM. *bers one of another.* For there is in Nature a very close Alliance between all Mankind; nay, the Dependence of Men upon, and their Subserviency to one another, seems to be no less necessary, than that of the Members in the same individual Body. And as 'tis unnatural for the Eye wilfully (as it were) to misguide the Feet; so 'tis for one Man to lye, or defraud another; Truth being as needful to guide, and govern our mutual Entercourse, each with other, as the Direction of the Eye is, to conduct the Feet.

BUT when Men are combined together in a Body Politick, the better to pursue those Ends, for which they are naturally fitted, and for which God designed them; this lays them under an additional Tye, to observe the fundamental Laws of Society in General; as well as that of particular Societies, into which they are incorporated; among both which, the Precepts of Veracity, and Fidelity must of Necessity hold their Place. And these ought most inviolably to be observ'd; because otherwise the Comforts of Society will be in a great Measure lost, and Men had as good almost

almost live as wild, and unciviliz'd as the <sup>S E R M.</sup> Beasts; as be perpetually laying in Wait, to <sup>IX.</sup> ensnare each other in their daily Commu-  

nication.

AND when these Societies are made up of *Christians*, the Union is much more intimate, and the Obligation is much stronger, much more sacred. For *Christians* are by Profession the Followers of *Christ*, in *whose Mouth no Guile was found*; and therefore it is of all Things the most incongruous, to name his Name with lying Lips. Nay *Christians are the Body of Christ*, (as says the <sup>1</sup> Cor. xii. Apostle) and *Members in particular*. Nay, <sup>27.</sup> as they hold the Head which is *Christ*, and are knit together, and grow up in Love; they are, they ought to be of one Heart, of one Soul, and to have but one common Sense; so that if *one Member suffer*, *all the Members must suffer with it*. And therefore for one *Christian* to lye to another, is (in a spiritual Sense) as unnatural, and unreasonable, as for the Tongue to shed Venome upon itself, or the Heart to divide one Ventricle from the other. Upon the whole therefore it must be grant-

SERM. ed; that that is a very enormous Sin indeed, that thus at once snaps asunder all the most engaging Ties of natural Affinity, civil Relation, and *Christian Fellowship*.

IX.

AND thus far I have endeavour'd to discover, and lay open the moral Turpitude, and Baseness of a Lye in General. Give me leave moreover,

III. *Thirdly*, To detect the particular Malignity of most of the several Sorts of Lies, that commonly pass up and down, and make much Mischief in the World.

THE vending of Lyes is so current, and so constant a Trade; the Multiplicity of the false Wares so great, and the Abuses, and Injuries, that People suffer by this Means, are so many, and gross; that I have not Time to set them forth distinctly. It shall suffice, if amidst this vast Variety, I stigmatize only those, that are the most customary, and familiar in People's Mouths; and of these some are jocular Lyes, and some are serious Lyes: The jocular Lye is that which is wittily invented for the Sake of Merriment, and  
Diver-

Diverfion; the ferious Lye has more De-  
liberation in it, and farther Defigns.

SERM.  
IX.

AND of this later Sort, fome are *judicial*,  
and fome *extrajudicial*. That I call a *judicial* Lye, which is dressed up in Form  
of Testimony, and solemnly deliver'd in,  
for Evidence in a public Court: That's an  
*extrajudicial* Lye, which paffes only in  
common Entercourse, and occasional Con-  
versation.

AND of these again; some proceed from  
Envy, Malice, or Revenge; some from the  
Love of filthy Lucre, or any Kind of for-  
did Interest: Some from Pride, and Va-  
nity; and some from a Sense of Shame,  
and Fear, and an evil Conscience. And  
they are levelled, some against a Man's  
Goods; and some against his good Name,  
and some against his very Life itself; nay,  
there are Lyes of so malignant a Nature,  
that they are no other than Snares of  
Death, to the heedless Soul that gives them  
Credit.

BUT if we take them all together in the  
Gross, we may fairly pronounce, that  
whencesoever they spring, or whithersoever  
they tend or aim; their Beginning is al-  
ways



SERM. ways in Wickedness, and their end in Mis-  
 IX. chief, more or less.

AND consequently, though all of them are not attended with the like Aggravations; yet there is none of them without a sufficient Share of Guilt; too much I doubt, the most colourable of them all, to abide a strict Examination. For

*First*, To begin with that which looks as airy, and pleasant, as if it had nothing to answer for; the *jocular* Lye I mean: Even that I think can hardly be reckon'd in the Number of those Things, that are just, and honest; much less those that are lovely, and of good Report. Nay, it must pass, I fear, for one Instance of that Kind of *foolish Talking and Jesting*, which the *Apostle* says, *is not convenient*. For take it at the best in those, who addict themselves much to it; it betrays a great Deal of Levity, and vain Affectation of Wit, at the Expence of Truth, and Modesty; at the Hazard of their own Reputation, and that of other Men too.

Ephes. v.  
4.

AND of those, that set up for Banterers, it is observable; that as the whole Burden of their Discourse is Sham, and Fiction,  
 and

and studied Impertinence; so they can scarce tell how to frame themselves to be serious, or to utter a sober Truth; at least 'tis not every Body that knows how to take them, or how far to trust them. And by this Means, the main End of Speech, (which was honestly to convey our Thoughts to each other, that so we might all act upon the Square, and live together in mutual Confidence) is in a great Measure eluded; though not so maliciously perverted, as by the grave deliberate Lyar.

AND yet to lye even in Jest, is not so harmless a Thing to one's Neighbour, as they that use it, may be apt to imagine. For to abuse any Man's Simplicity, and Credulity on Purpose to lead him into an Error, that may expose him to Laughter, or some other greater Inconvenience; to fasten imaginary Crimes upon a Man, or to dress up an Infirmary, or a Mishap in Colours invented purely to make it look ridiculous; is an Injury mingled with Contempt, that favours as little of Candour, as it does of Truth.

NOR will it be much Alleviation in this Case, to be sure far from a Compensation,  
to

SERM. to alledge; it was but in Jest, and no Manner of Harm was meant by it. For to lead a Man into a Ditch in Jest, would be no Ease to his Fall; and to strike at a Man's Reputation, purely for Trial of Skill, would neither allay the Smart, nor prevent the Blemish; 'tis but small Satisfaction, when a Man has mocked, abused, and damnified his Friend, to say, was I not in Sport? In short, he that bolts out a Lye in Sport, and at Randome, is answerable for the ill Effects of it; though possibly he might neither foresee, nor design them. For (as has been before observed) the very evil Tendency of a Lye to deceive People to their Hurt, is Ground sufficient to arraign it of Injustice, even without any ill Intention of the Speaker, or any mischievous Operation upon the Hearer. And the Reason is, because he that uses this indiscreet Sort of Liberty, though he intends no Mischief, yet he cannot always, and 'tis seldom, or never that he does, provide against it; for he neither knows, nor considers what Vexation, Trouble, Disgrace, or Damage, it may create to some Body or other: And  
when

*and Falshood consider'd.*

301

SERM.  
IX.

when it so happens, the Wrong apparently lies at his Door; nay, and even though no Harm ensues, there is no Thanks due to him; nor is he indeed to be excused; because he took no Care to prevent it. Upon this Account it was, that *Pythagoras* was wont to say; "Chuse rather to cast a Stone at Adventures, than an idle Speech; "for who can tell indeed whom the one, "or the other may hit? And a jocular Lye is most certainly one of those idle Speeches, that may do more Harm than one is aware of: Nay, 'tis to be fear'd, that 'tis one of *those idle Speeches*, for which our Saviour says, *We must give Account at the Day of Judgment*; as being utterly unprofitable to any good Purpose, and almost naturally Productive of Evil. And I need not have spent so much Breath to prove it so, but that the comical Humour, in which it is sometimes clad, is apt to make People judge it as innocent, as it is ludicrous. But if these ludicrous Lyes are by no Means to be acquitted; those that are more serious, and doubtless more designing, will deserve to be condemned.

Mat. xii.  
36.

FOR



SERM.

FOR Instance;

IX.

*Secondly*, THE fordid mercenary Lye, that proceeds from a Principle of Covetousness, and Craft, and is made Use of as a Bait to catch the Unwary; what shall we think of that? Why, 'tis so common in Matters of Commerce, and Traffic, that one would think there were no Trading without it; that is to say, no Trading without Cheating; which yet it were both uncharitable, and unreasonable to think: And therefore it concerns all Traders, not only to put away Lying themselves, but to discountenance it all they can, in the Way of Business; as being both a Prejudice, and a Scandal to Trade: For when all is said and done; a Lye is no better than a downright Cheat. For that *Seller*, who by a glozing Tongue endeavours to conceal the Fault of his Commodity, or to commend it for the good Qualities which it has not, is but framing a Deceit for the Buyer the mean while, to make him the better content with a bad Pennyworth.

AND he that sets an extravagant Price upon what he sells, and then by strong Asseverations labours to extort the Buyer's

Assent to the Truth of what he says; he is S E R M.  
a Spoiler in a double Sense; for he offers a IX.  
Violence to the Man's Modesty, good Nature, and Candour; at the same Time, that he cozens him of his Money.

AND this is no Exaggeration, but the plain State of the Matter, even as the Scripture itself; nay, the express Law of *Moses* will inform us. For we read *Lev. xix. 11. Ye shall not steal, nor deal falsely; nor lye one to another.* From whence we may observe the strict Affinity that there is betwixt Stealing, and Lying; and how both center, as it were, in false Dealing. And indeed, when a Lye is employ'd, as an Instrument, to skreen unlawful Gain from those a Man deals with; the Difference is very inconsiderable; its only that the Thief does that covertly, or perhaps forcibly with his Hands; which the Lyar does as slyly, and effectually with his Tongue. But

*Thirdly,* THERE is another Sort of Lying very rife in the World, perhaps much more injurious than this, because it robs People of a Treasure, that no Money can repair; this is it, that springs from the very  
Root

SER. M. Root of Bitterness, Envy, Malice, Animosity, Revenge, and the like; and it deals chiefly in Obloquy, and Defamation, Whispering, and Backbiting, Calumny, and false Accusation. And a Slanderer is certainly of all Lyars one of the most detestable; because he nearest resembles his *Father the Devil, who is the Accuser of the Brethren*; and because he is continually devising, and propagating of Mischief; which is the very Employment of a Fiend.

AND the fatal Success of this devilish Artifice is too apparent to be denied, tho' the Damage at the same Time is hardly to be estimated. For when once the Bow of a slanderous Tongue is drawn, how far the Arrows will fly, and how deep they will wound, no Body can tell. But wherever they gain an Entrance, and obtain Credit, they are highly injurious in a double Respect: *First* to the Person spoken of, by spoiling him of his good Name, the dearest Thing in the World, except a good Conscience; and that which 'tis seldom in the Slanderer's Thoughts, hardly ever in his Power, to restore again. And *Secondly* to the Person spoken to, who by  
being

being too easy of Belief, is lead Headlong <sup>S E R M.</sup>  
into an ill-natured Prejudice against his <sup>IX.</sup>  
Neighbour; and robbed of his Candour,  
and his Charity.

AND as all Infection, the farther it spreads,  
is the more deadly; so it is with the  
Poyson of a lying Tongue. And therefore  
the dispersing, and publishing of scanda-  
lous Libels, is a most pestilent Sort of Ly-  
ing: Because the Slander scatters wider this  
Way, and rakes deeper, than a little *Ex-  
tempore* Railing in private Conversation  
could do; because when 'tis levelled, (as  
too frequently it is) against Persons of a  
public Character; the Public itself also  
suffers, whilst Heart-burnings, and Jealou-  
sies are stirred up, and Parties, and Fa-  
ctions inflamed, to the great Disturbance  
of the Peace, the Distraction of loyal, and  
well minded Subjects; and the Hazard of  
the common Safety.

*Fourthly*, THERE is another Sort of Ly-  
ing very near akin to Slander, and that is  
Flattery; whose Words though they may  
seem the smother of the two, yet they  
are nevertheless deceitful, 'tis well known;



SERM. and in the End, they often prove full as  
 IX. bitter, and as stabbing.

THE Method they both make Use of, I reckon, is in a good Measure the same; viz. a false, and disadvantageous Representation of Things, and Persons. For the Flatterer, I believe, represents a Man no less to his Disadvantage, by dawbing him with Praises that he never deserved, than the Slanderer does by loading him with an unjust Accusation; especially where the Flattery is greedily receiv'd, and swallowed; for then it is in a fair Way to make the Man as bad, as even Calumny itself would wish, to have him thought.

IN brief, as the Slanderer allows himself to say all Manner of Evil falsely, in order to blacken, and do Despight to his Enemies: So the Flatterer is ready still to commend as falsely, and as fulsomely, to please and ingratiate with his Patron. And neither of them make any Conscience of what they say, so they can but gain their Point, and impose and deceive.

THUS far therefore they are Brethren at least in Evil! But 'tis farther remarkable, that a Flatterer is a Sycophant, and a  
 false

false Accuser by Trade; the very Course of his Business leads him to it; nay, the Success of his best laid Designs often depends upon it: For his first Point is to insinuate into the good Opinion of the Person he is practising upon; and this he does by swelling him up to a high Conceit of himself. His next Point is to engross him wholly for his own, without any Share, or Competition; and this is to be done by keeping others at a convenient Distance; especially honest, and wise Men, who might go near, 'tis like, to undeceive the deluded Self-Admirer, and teach him to know himself, and his Friends better. To prevent which, the present Possessor is forced to bestir himself, to invent Stories, to create Suspicions, to forge Crimes, and to lay them at any Body's Door, rather than they should be suffer'd to come near, and break in upon what he knows to be his own Property.

BUT without tracing the Alliance of these two egregious Lyars, the Slanderers, and the Flatterers any farther; it appears, I think, that the last of the two has single Guilt enough of his own to account for, without bearing any Part of the Burden.

S E R M.

IX.

FOR Flattery is most undeniably a pernicious Practice in these three Respects: As *First*, That it puts the grossest, and most dangerous Cheat upon a Man that can be, by giving him a false Notion of himself, and thereby making him a Stranger to his own Soul; and equally so to Humility, and Modesty; and indeed to all Wisdom, and Virtue. And then it passes a second Sham upon him, by presenting the deceitful Kisses, and Applauses of a flattering Mouth, as the Tokens of real Friendship: And *lastly* to shew how unconscionable an Imposture it is, it makes a Prey of the Wretch after all, and takes large Rewards for its Treachery, and Villany.

AND I shall add no more, to encrease a Guilt that needs no Aggravation; only I must take Notice of one Resemblance more, betwixt it, and its old Ally; and that is, that as Slander impudently flies at Dignity without Distinction; and takes Pride to aim at the highest; so even this sneaking Vice has the Confidence to creep into great Houses, Courts, and Palaces, and delights to lurk there, as a Spy, and a Deceiver; waiting the Opportunity to administer

minister the Poyson, that is so pleasing to SERM.  
a vitiated Palate. IX.

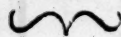
BUT if it can be so happy as to approach an ambitious giving Monarch's Throne, or his Cabinet; then it is in its proper Province, then it shews the whole Mystery of Deceit; it pours out all its sweetest Incense, it draws forth all its richest Colours, and lays them on profusely: It changes itself into all Shapes; nay, it changes the Names, and fain it would the Nature of Things! *calling evil Good, and Good Evil*; making burning, and plundering, surprising, or buying of Towns, to pass for noble Atchievements; and even Perfidiousness itself, a distinguishing Mark of Greatness; an Exaltation above the common Rules, and Measures of Faith, and Honour.

IN a Word, it deifies the aspiring Mortal, and idolizes his very Vices; it represents him to himself, as the sole Standard of all that is truly Heroical; marking all his Actions, as such with the Stamp of his own Authority, as if there were no Superior, to whom he must become accountable, or the most high ruled not among the Kingdoms of Men.



SERM.

IX.

Prov. xxvi.  
28.

AND when a flattering Mouth is arrived to this Impudence, and can dare to infill these Suggestions into a Prince's Ears, as being secure of a favourable Hearing; then, as *Solomon* says, *It worketh Ruine* to whole Families, Cities, Countries, Continents: Incredible Ruine indeed! were it not that we know where to find the renowned Instance to prove it by: In the mean Time this Digression (if such it be) has more abundantly demonstrated the Perniciousness of this Kind of Lying called Flattery.

*Fifthly*, I MIGHT now proceed, to lay open the Iniquity, and Folly of other Kinds of Lying, that are very familiarly used among us; particularly that which proceeds from a Vanity, or Ostentation, that puts People perpetually upon telling great Stories of themselves, to the End, they may look as considerable in the Eyes of others, as they do in their own. But this Sort of Lying, though it be the Offspring of Pride; and though they who have got the Habit of it, do take Abundance of Pains to cajole others in the Belief of that, which no Body will vouch, but themselves; yet their Cunning for the most Part is too slight

flight to be a Covering for their Folly; SERM.  
and consequently the Practise vain, and IX.  
wicked, as it is of itself, is not very hurtful  
to its Neighbours.

THOSE Lyes are of somewhat a worse  
Tendency, and a more dangerous Nature,  
by which People endeavour to conceal their  
Faults. For a Fault concealed by a Lye,  
is at least made double by that wicked  
Artifice. And he that can find in his Heart  
to invent a Lye, on Purpose to palliate his  
Sin, can scarce be in any good Disposition  
to repent him of that Sin; and his having  
so dexterous an Evasion at Hand, will go  
near to harden him in his Impenitence.  
And in the mean Time, he does as long  
as these Shifts will last, deceive, and elude  
the Care, and Inspection of those, who  
are more concerned for him, than he is  
for himself. But he cannot hope to escape  
*thus* long; for a Lye that is accompanied  
with a Sense of more Guilt than its own,  
has commonly an inconstant, and confused  
Look, and is frequently also laid together  
inconsistently; which a discerning Eye will  
soon discover; and the Discovery once  
made, he is quite beaten from his Shel-

SERM. ter, and for the future lies always open  
 IX. to Suspicion. So that this Sort of Lying  
 (though culpable enough in all Reason) is  
 not attended with the like aggravating  
 Circumstances, as are some of the forego-  
 ing. But since it would be endless to pro-  
 secute every several Instance that may be  
 thought of,

*Sixthly*, and *Lastly*, THERE is one Kind  
 of Lye still behind, which has more Ma-  
 lignity in it, than any of the rest, because  
 it is fatal to Mens Souls, not only to those  
 that make, and love it; but also to those,  
 who suffer themselves to be ensnared by it:  
 I mean a religious Lye (as I may so call  
 it) *i. e.* a Lye concerning Religion, whe-  
 ther for, or against it. In the first Rank,  
*viz.* of such Lyes as are for, *i. e.* pretend-  
 edly for the Advantage of Religion; are  
 your pious Frauds, your legendary Mira-  
 cles, your holy Reliques, and all that false  
 Merchandize, by which the Church of  
*Rome* gains so much to herself, and so lit-  
 tle to *Christianity*. Now all these are as  
 injurious, and in Consequence are as per-  
 nicious, as they are deceitful.

INJURIOUS

INJURIOUS they are to God, and his sacred Truth: For 'tis a dishonourable Reflexion upon that God, who is unchangeable in Holiness, and infinite in Power, and Wisdom, once to imagine, that he should be reduced to serve himself of Falshood, and Forgery, for the better Confirmation, and Propagation of Truth. And 'tis a Derogation to the Validity of that mighty Truth which has hitherto prevailed, and is strong enough to prevail against all Opposition, (as being attested by undeniable Miracles, and supported by God's faithful Promise) I say, 'tis a Derogation to it, and an Undermining of it; needlessly to call into its Assistance, the wretched Succour of Tricks, and Slights, and lying Wonders.

IN the mean Time, the Prejudice of these bold Fictions, let it go how it will, is unspeakably great. For where they are swallowed without chewing, and pass undiscover'd; they do manifestly weaken, and endanger the common Faith, by building it upon a false Foundation; that won't abide the Shock of Argument. But when the Cheat is once found out, that renders the



SERM. the whole Cause suspected of Imposture,  
 IX. and ministers Occasion of cavilling to the  
 Sceptic, and helps to harden the Atheist.  
 So preposterous a Thing it is, to lye for  
 the Truth, and to rest Religion upon a  
 wrong Bottom.

BUT then on the other Hand, the Lyes  
 that are framed against Religion, and op-  
 posed to the Truth, and Certainty of it;  
 are no less fallacious, and to be sure, no  
 less pernicious.

FOR shall a Man embolden himself to  
 give the Lye to the common Sentiments of  
 Mankind, as well as the Misgivings of his  
 own Heart; and to deny the Grounds of  
 all Religion, the very Being of a God, and  
 the necessary Difference between Good,  
 and Evil, and the immortal State of Re-  
 wards, and Punishments; merely because  
 he cannot comprehend all the Mysteries  
 in Religion, or because he has known some  
 hypocritical Professors, and false Defen-  
 ders of it; or for any other pretended Rea-  
 son whatsoever?

FOR doubtless, that Man must put an  
 egregious Fallacy upon himself, or rather  
 offer Violence to his own Sense, that will  
 allow

allow no Weight to all the positive, and irrefragable Proofs, even of natural Religion, because of some Difficulties which he cannot, or rather does not desire to get over: And in the mean while he is a very bold, and impious Seducer, who will pretend to set up for a Teacher, and Propagator of that *Infidelity*, of which 'tis impossible to have any Proof; and in which he can find no reasonable Satisfaction himself.

AND 'tis equally false Reasoning, and unfair Practice, to call in Question the Authority of Scripture, which has all the Marks of a divine Revelation, both as to its intrinsic Excellency, and its external Evidence; purely upon the Score of certain groundless Cavils maliciously raised, and imaginary Inconsistences artfully improved; which though they may stagger the Minds of the unlearned, and the unwary; yet they can never cast the Scale against all those cogent, and weighty Reasons, that are to be produced in Attestation, and Confirmation of it.

BUT all that Kind of false Reasoning, is certainly a very imprudent, and a very malicious

SERM. malicious Sort of Lying; both, because it  
 IX. dares to traduce, and even to outface the  
 reveal'd Truth of God himself; and because it makes Use of this wicked Art, to draw others into the Licentiousness of Living, which the Belief of the Scripture would not suffer them so easily to comply with.

BUT it is still more bold, and impious, (if more can be) to pretend to receive the Scripture, as of divine Authority, and yet to deny the fundamental Truths therein contain'd; or to pervert the manifest Sense of them by false, and forced Interpretations.

FOR *who is a Lyar* (saith St. *John*,) *but he who denieth that Jesus is the Christ?* And who indeed is he who denieth both Father, and Son; but he who endeavours to invalidate the plain Testimony of Scripture, for the eternal Generation of the Son of God, and his essential Divinity; who has himself declared, *that he and the Father are one*; and all this upon the Strength of a little Subtlety in Criticism, and sophistical Arguing; or perhaps mere idle Conjecture, or confident Supposition?

AND

AND yet, this has been the great Craft, S E R M.  
and Slight, both of antient, and modern IX.  
*Heretics*; whereby they have tossed unsta-  
ble Minds to and fro, with the empty  
Wind of Doctrine; and have often driven  
them, (as one Absurdity must be called in,  
to re-enforce another) to take their last mi-  
serable Refuge in *Deism*, or downright *A-*  
*theism*.

AND 'tis notorious, that the Injurious-  
ness of such lying Sophistry as this, is in-  
finitely great, beyond all Valuation, and  
Reparation; because, besides the Effron-  
tery of changing the Truth of God into a  
Lye, by its own corrupt Glosses; it does  
moreover industriously deceive, and betray  
poor heedless Souls into everlasting Per-  
dition.

AND thus I have endeavoured faithfully  
to represent to you the special Guilt, and  
Malignity of most, or of the chief of those  
several Sorts of Lyes; which frequently  
pass up and down, and make much Mis-  
chief in the World. And I stop here only,  
because I would not be tedious in heaping  
Abundance of plain Instances together; not  
that any of those Sorts of Lying, which I  
have



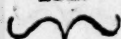
SERM. have left unmentioned, are therefore to  
 IX. pass for innocent; for that none of them  
 are, as I shall prove under my next Head  
 of Discourse. Only give me Leave to  
 make this Remark to you, with Respect  
 to those already mentioned; (as many of  
 them I mean, as may take Place occasio-  
 nally in formal Contracts, or solemn Te-  
 stimony, which for Distinction Sake, I  
 call'd judicial Lyes) I say, that when any  
 of them happens so to do, they are then  
 attended with greater Aggravations, and  
 much worse Consequence, than other-  
 wise.

AND the Reason is plain in both Cases;  
 for in making of Contracts, (besides the  
 general Obligation to Truth, and Fidelity  
 in all our Entercourses) there is a special  
 Stipulation, and a direct Promise interpo-  
 sed, and that creates a new Trust; and  
 that Trust a new Obligation. And the  
 Breach of this Obligation, as it shews the  
 Man's Intent to be more villainous, so  
 it enhances his Guilt, and (according to the  
 Value of the Thing contracted for) adds to  
 the Injury too; which in the Falsification  
 of a Contract has always this peculiar  
 Aggra-

Aggravation, that that which the honest SERM.  
Man builds his Confidence upon, and thinks IX.  
his Safeguard; the Knave craftily makes  
use of as the surest Way to decoy him.

THUS again in bearing Testimony, the Solemnity of an Oath is superadded, to strengthen what the Witness asserts; and this being an immediate Appeal to God, 'tis the utmost Confirmation that can be given to it: And though it be never so wicked a Lye, it must in Judgment pass for Truth, unless it be notably confronted indeed, or manifestly shewn to be inconsistent, or impossible. And the mischievous Effects of false Testimony are so much the more grievous, and intolerable; because, though it should strike at a Man's Property, good Name, or even Life itself; yet (if he cannot effectually disprove it) he must abide by the Sentence of the Law, and be constrain'd to suffer the Wrong, the Shame, the Punishment; without Remedy, or Reparation. And the Grievance is still the more insupportable, because Innocence itself, can never be secure, it shall not be oppress'd with it: For no man can foretel, what a profligate Lyar may swear to:

SERM. to: No Man be at all Times prepared to

IX.  fence against a slanderous Accusation, or malicious Prosecution, bolster'd up with Evidence cunningly laid together, and concerted aforehand.

THESE therefore, and such Circumstances as these, do apparently load a Lye with the most horrible Guilt, as they arm it, to work the most incurable Mischief.

*Now to God the Father, &c.*

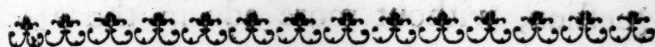


SERMON



# SERMON X.

The Nature of Truth, and Falshood consider'd.

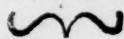


EPHES. iv. 25.

*Wherefore putting away Lying,  
speak every Man Truth with his  
Neighbour; for we are Members  
one of another.*



IN discoursing upon these SERM.  
Words; I propos'd. X.



I. *First*, To enquire in-  
to the Nature, and Forma-

lity of a Lye.

VOL. II.

Y

II. *Secondly*,



SERM. II. *Secondly*, To lay open the Turpitude,  
 X. and Baseness of it in General; as also

III. *Thirdly*, THE particular Malignity of most of the several Sorts of Lyes, that commonly pass up and down, and make Mischief in the World.

THESE Particulars I have fully considered. I proceed now,

IV. *Fourthly*, To the general Question, viz. Whether all Lying be universally unlawful. And if I should determine this Question, without more ado in the Affirmative; I should have the Countenance, and Concurrence of all the modern *Schoolmen*, and *Casuits*; who unanimously follow their great Master St. *Austin*, and condemn it without Exception.

AND they have Reason, they say; for the Scripture itself condemns it, and God abhors it: And besides, a Lye is in its own Nature simply Evil; and *we must* in no wise *do Evil*, even though it were to that End, *that Good might come of it*; and therefore they think, there can be no Room, no Excuse indeed for a Lye, even when it looks most plausible; and might prove most serviceable.

AND

AND so far 'tis Right: for a Lye is per-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
petually rank'd in Scripture, with the most <sup>X.</sup>  
heinous Offences, and threatned with the  
severest Punishment; which shews it to be  
sufficiently hateful in the Sight of God:  
And I do agree also, that it is in its own  
Nature morally Evil, and therefore it is not  
in any Case to be dispensed with, or ex-  
cused. But then it ought to be consider'd,  
wherein the Nature of it does really con-  
sist; that we may know the better, where  
to charge the Evil of it; and this so much  
the rather, because a false Notion of a Lye  
may be as apt to ensnare Mens Conscien-  
ces, as 'the Lye itself usually is, to impose  
upon their Understandings.

AND truly to my Apprehension, the  
*Schoolmen*, and their Followers, with their  
abundant Subtlety, seem to overstrain this  
Point; and though they decide it right,  
they maintain it wrong.

THUS when they place the intrinsic E-  
vil of a Lye in its Opposition to the eter-  
nal Truth; if by the eternal Truth they  
mean God's sacred Truth reveal'd in Scrip-  
ture, that's Proof sufficient, that 'tis un-  
lawful: And if they will, universally un-  
lawful,

SER M. lawful, because 'tis universally forbidden;

IX. but that alone proves not, whether it was forbidden for its own Sake, or for some other Reason; and therefore 'tis improper to fix the intrinsic Evil of it here.

If by the eternal Truth, they mean, that superessential Truth which God himself is, it is surely a very incompetent Proof of the moral Evil of a Lye; to say, that it is opposite to something, of a Kind so infinitely different, and distant from it; that there can be no Comparison between them. If by the eternal Truth, they mean the Veracity, and Faithfulness of God, whereby he is always constant to himself, and to his Word; it must be own'd, that 'tis the great Excellency, and Perfection of God, that he can neither deceive, nor be deceiv'd; and on the contrary, that 'tis no small Imperfection in Mankind, that they are but too liable to both. But to alledge, that God cannot lye, and that Men can, and do too often; though it discovers, not only the Imperfection, but the Corruption also of humane Nature; yet it does not directly shew, wherein the moral Evil of Lying must consist.

AGAIN,

AGAIN, if by eternal Truth, they understood that metaphysical Relation, and Agreement that is supposed to be between our Notions of Things, and their real Nature; they are still apparently wide of the Mark: For a Man may speak such a *metaphysical* Truth, and yet in a moral Sense be reputed a Liar at the same Time, if the Truth he spoke was besides his Knowledge, or contrary to his present Sentiments. As on the other Hand, 'tis possible to utter a *metaphysical* Falshood, and yet be a moral honest Man notwithstanding; if so be, he himself was innocently persuaded of the Truth of what he said, and had no secret Design of imposing upon others.

AND, since there is no such necessary Connexion, between that which is morally true, and that which is metaphysically so; 'tis evident, that the Immorality of a Lye is not rightly founded on its bare Opposition to *metaphysical* Truth.

WHEN shall we come at the Point then? Shall we say with *Aquinas*, and his Disciples; that a Lye is simply, and necessarily unlawful, as being an Act that falls upon, and is concerned about an undue Matter;



SERM. for Speech being (as it is) the natural Interpreter of the Mind, it is unnatural (says he) and that which ought not to be, for a Man to signify that in Words, which at the same Time is far enough from his Thoughts. It is to disturb the Harmony, which is between our two Faculties of Speaking, and Thinking, and to pervert the proper Use of both.

BUT this I doubt is not altogether so solid, as 'tis specious; for though the Faculty of Speech was given us, to express our Thoughts; yet this does not infer an indispensable Necessity of Speaking all that we think, or always just as we think; and as little does it imply that 'tis absolutely, and intrinsically Evil, to do otherwise. For if we consider it aright, the principal, and most important End, both of our Reason, and Speech, (as we were designed for sociable Creatures) was to enable us to communicate together; and by that Means, to become useful, and beneficial to each other. And no Question, so far as Truth is conducive to this End, (as for the most Part it is) so far the Obligation to it is necessary, and indispensable.

But

But if (as it sometimes happens) Truth itself should mainly obstruct this very End, which might be come at, though not so directly, by other Means; I say in that Case, it does not so clearly appear, that Men are scrupulously bound to speak only strict, and literal Truth, and that without the least Detriment, either to the Community in General, or any Member in particular; at least it does not appear, that it is so unnatural an Abuse of Speech, as is objected; since it successfully enough pursues the very Design of Nature, which was to serve our mutual Necessities, and Conveniences; and make Society comfortable to us. And therefore certainly this cannot be supposed to be the Foundation of that intrinsic moral Evil, that is inseparable from Lying.

AND I have thought it convenient once for all, to set aside this, and such like insufficient Reasons as are commonly alledged, because they serve only to breed causeless Scruples, and to perplex a Case, that is otherwise plain enough.

FOR the Short of the Matter is this, the very Nature, and Formality of a Lye is such; that take it in what Circumstances

SERM. you will, it must be unlawful; and the  
 X. Reason of it is notorious: For a Lye (ac-  
 cording to the Definition of it) is an Un-  
 truth, or a supposed Untruth, (importing  
 a Disagreement between Mens Words, and  
 Thoughts) and accompanied with a Ten-  
 dency, or Aptness (for the most Part also  
 directed by the Intention of the Speaker) to  
 deceive, and injure ones Neighbour. So  
 that 'tis not a naked Untruth, but an Un-  
 truth with a Tendency, or Intention to  
 deceive, and by deceiving maliciously to  
 design, or unconcernedly to hazard the do-  
 ing an Injury to some Body or other: For  
 there is Hurtfulness, as well as Deceitful-  
 ness, always imply'd in a Lye. For all  
 Men (without some particular Forfeiture)  
 have a general Right to the common Be-  
 nefits of Speech, *i. e.* true Information, and  
 useful Communication: And whosoever  
 misapplies that admirable Talent, so as to  
 make it the Engine of Deceit, and Mis-  
 chief; makes a foul Invasion upon this na-  
 tural Right, and is therein highly inju-  
 rious.

A LYE therefore, consider'd in its for-  
 mal Nature, must be allow'd to be an ab-  
 solute

solute Evil; for this very Reason, because S E R M.  
it always supposes a Violation of Right, X.  
and a want of that Regard which is always  
due to Justice, and Charity, and all Kind  
of social Virtues.

AND allow it once to be unlawful, and  
you must allow it to be absolutely, and u-  
niversally so; because it can never become  
lawful, to invade any Man's undisputed  
Right; or to run the wilful Hazard at  
least of doing him an undeserved Injury.  
And an Injury will always be an Injury,  
call it by what mollifying Name you please.  
And a Lye as such, is always actually in-  
jurious, or fatally fitted so to be, cloath it  
in what Circumstances you will; as being  
indeed a dangerous Misapplication of  
Speech, fruitful of all Manner of Mischief,  
baneful to humane Society, and incon-  
sistent with all our Relations, and Obliga-  
tions; as Men, as Citizens, as *Christians*.

AND accordingly, I have endeavour'd to  
detect (in the former Part of this Discourse)  
the malignant Qualities, and pernicious  
Effects of the chief of those several Sorts of  
Lyes; that commonly pass up and down,  
and make Havock in the World. And I  
have



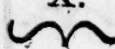
SERM. have found them (all that I have examined)  
 X. so notoriously guilty, that I may e'en despair, (if I were tied up by the Laws of a perfect Induction) to find any of them innocent.

AND indeed how is it possible? For no good Intention can justify a bad Action, or turn an Injury into a Piece of Justice, or Kindness. Upon which Score it is, that I have formerly disallow'd all pious Frauds, and false Stories of Miracles; because they reflect Dishonour upon God, and his Truth, and unsettle Mens Faith; and this Effect they will naturally have, even though they who vend them, could in Charity be thought to propose never so good an End to themselves.

AND if a good Intention will not avail to the Justification of a Lye, it will be in vain for the Liar to plead, that he had no ill Design, or perhaps no Design at all in it. For if a Man sets his Toils, though he does not directly drive the Herd into them; yet if any of them happen to straggle that Way, and fall in, he is justly chargeable with the Damage, whether designed, or undesigned. So in like Manner, if a Man  
 addicts

addicts himself to Lying, out of Levity, or Vanity, or mere Inconsideration; tho' he knows not, nor considers not the ill Effects it may possibly produce; yet he is answerable for them, nay for the Possibility of them. For it is a visible Defect of that natural Justice, that is due to every Man in the common Use of Speech, to expose them even to uncertain Hazard, by our incautious Discourse; which ought always to be employed to their Advantage, but never, if we can help it, to their Detriment, or their Danger. Upon the whole therefore, a Lye must be own'd to be universally unlawful, because it is in its very Nature deceitful, and hurtful; and *that* no innocent Thing can be. But then there is a stricter, and nicer Question behind, and that is,

V. *Fifthly*, WHETHER every Deviation from Truth, does carry the Implication, and involve Men in the Imputation of a Lye. But here I cannot so readily go into the Affirmative, because I just now obviated some of those improper Reasons, that might seem to make for it. Besides,  
it

SERM. it would be too rash to condemn in the  
 X.  Gross, all witty Fables and Apologues, Parables and Allegories, Ironies, and Hyperboles; all of which have, in the general Vogue of the World, passed for ingenious, and useful Inventions; and most of them have the Usage of Scripture to give them Countenance. And perhaps, there are some other particular Cases so very tender, that they deserve at least to be treated with less Rigour.

THERE is indeed a general Obligation upon us all, to speak simple, and unphiflicated Truth; because Truth is generally the best, and the nearest Way to arrive at the primary Ends of rational Society; and both to impart, and secure the Benefits of it to each other. But what if Truth, through the Perverseness of the Persons concerned, or ill Posture, or Extremity of the Case; should instead of being subservient to these Ends, necessarily frustrate, and destroy them? Must we still be obliged to speak Truth against the true Design of it; and not to recede one Tittle from it, for Fear of incurring the Guilt, and Censure of Lying? I am not averse from

from thinking, that there may be Room for a more favourable Construction, and Reason too. For though every the least Deviation from Truth, is confessedly a Falshood; yet every Falshood is not injuriously deceitful, which is the noxious Composition of a Lye. And therefore it does not deserve rashly to be called by so ill-favour'd a Name; especially when effectual Care is taken either to prevent the Deceit itself, that might arise from such Falshood, or any possible Injury that might redound from it; but most of all, when by a happy Dexterity, it is adapted to supply the Defects, and answer the Purposes of Truth itself; by usefully instructing, and powerfully persuading those, that could not be otherwise so well wrought upon; by cleverly diverting an imminent Mischiefe, rescuing an innocent Person, &c.

BUT this will be seen in particular Instances. Let that familiar one, of the usual Method of Parents, in managing Children be the first. There are few, I believe, that scruple to allure them to what is good, and to deter them from Evil, by such apposite Fictions, as are most likely  
to

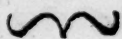


SERM to make Impression upon them; especially  
 X. when they find them otherwise untractable. The Reason of which, as *Grotius* thinks, is this; that they have no Capacity to judge of Truth, and consequently they have no Right to it; nor are they wronged in being deprived of it. But as *Pufendorf* judiciously enough remarks, they have certainly a Right to Truth, so far, as that scanty Capacity they have will admit of it: But without all Peradventure they have a Right not to be injured by Falshood.

AND if Truth, and Goodness may be most commodiously convey'd into their weak Minds, under a fabulous Dress, they are deceiv'd indeed, though not to their Prejudice, but Advantage; much by the same Stratagem, that they are tempted to take the Food, or Physic, that is salutary for them; by mingling it with something that is pleasant to the Taste: And he must be a rigid *Casuis*t indeed, that will pronounce every Parent, an Errant Lyar, for so useful, and innocent an Indulgence to his Child.

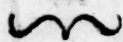
IN like Manner, Suppose a Physician, or any Friend should so far humour the wild Imagination of a Lunatic, fancying himself to be a Prince; as to shew him *Bedlam*, and persuade him 'tis his Palace; and by that Means get him safe lodg'd there, in order to his Cure; shall this friendly, and charitable Office pass under the Character of a Lye? Surely no! For 'tis evident in this Case, that Truth itself, had it been nakedly propos'd, would have been injurious to him, and enraged his Distemper; and no Man can have a Right to be injured, though it be by Truth itself. And therefore, if he was by a dexterous Device, inveigled into the Place that was fittest for him; there was no Wrong done to any Body; nothing indeed, but what all his Friends, or those who have any Pity for him, and even he himself, if he should recover his Senses, would be thankful for.

AGAIN, There is another Case, though not very like this, that in *Grotius's* Judgment, will deserve Favour; and that is, when two Persons are conferring about Matters, which it imports them to keep secret;

SERM.  
X.  


S E R M. secret ; if another should plant himself at

X.



the same Time, with an insidious Design to overhear them ; it is lawful (says our Author) so to frame their Discourse, as that the other shall collect nothing from it, but what is quite beside their Meaning. The Reason assigned for it is this, that though every Man owes the Debt of Truth to another, so far as their mutual Commerce, and Correspondence may require ; yet no Man is bound to publish his Secrets to every Body, that is inquisitive after them. And on the other Hand, if he that has no Right to know another's Secrets, shall out of an evil Curiosity, endeavour to pick them up in the Dark (as it were) by Stealth ; if a Mistake is laid in his Way in their Stead, there can be no Wrong done, since there was no Right on his Part existing ; and therefore, if he suffer by that Mistake, he has only himself to thank for it. But then if we make Use of this Allowance, we must remember to take this Caution along with it, that 'tis unlawful for two Persons to enter into a Confederacy, on Purpose to entice a third into a Snare, in which they hope to catch him,

him, for no other End, but to delude S E R M.  
him, and expose him. X.

THUS again, in Case a Fire should break out in the Neighbourhood of a Woman lying in Child-bed; 'tis lawful, as well as prudent I reckon, to conceal it from her, and even to possess her to the contrary, if she should apprehend it; 'till the Danger is over. And the plain Reason is, because it concerns her less in her present Condition, to be deprived of the Knowledge of the real Truth, than to avoid the Inconvenience of a sudden Fright: And therefore her Consent might fairly be presumed upon, to part with her Right to the one, rather than suffer under the ill Effects of the other: And they who deal with her upon this Presumption, are so far from being injurious, that 'tis the kindest Office they could do her.

AND as for that famous Instance of an innocent Person furiously pursued, by his Blood thirsty Enemy; I can't but think, that 'tis both lawful, and laudable to misinform, or misdirect the Pursuer. For I cannot divine for my Part, wherein the Wrong should lie; 'tis certain no Man can

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SERM. have a Right to be a Murderer; and  
 X. therefore he is not wrong'd sure, when he  
 is hindred from embruing his Hands in  
 Blood; nay, when he is hindred in Part,  
 from contracting all that horrible Guilt  
 upon himself, which in his Fury he would  
 have done. And 'tis absurd to say, that  
 'tis an Injury to an innocent Man, to pre-  
 serve his Life for him. And therefore I  
 can't see, how the Imputation of a Lye  
 (whose Nature it is to be injurious) should  
 be fastened upon a merciful, and a chari-  
 table Untruth; that prevents a more  
 grievous Mischief, and confers the most  
 valuable Kindness, without interfering with  
 any Body's Right, or procuring any Bo-  
 dy's Wrong. And we have Examples in  
 holy Writ, that look favourably upon this  
 Practice.

SUCH was that perhaps of the *Ægyptian*  
 Midwives, in their Answer to the merci-  
 less *Pharaoh*; though *Aquinas* indeed sets  
 it aside, because they had spared the  
*Hebrew* Children before, and then fal-  
 sified with *Pharaoh* afterwards, to save  
 themselves. But I confess, I can't so clear-  
 ly discern, why they should not be per-  
 mitted

mitted to shelter their own Lives from S E R M.  
 the Tyrant's Rage, after they had been X.  
 so tender to the Children; and therefore  
 this evasive Answer of theirs, ought not (I  
 should hope) to be branded for a Lye;  
 since though it might be to their own  
 Advantage, it cannot be said to be to the  
 Detriment of any other Person. And be-  
 sides God (as 'tis said in the very next  
 Verse) dealt well with the Midwives, there-  
 fore, for that very Reason; which seems  
 to be too direct an Approbation of an A-  
 ction, liable to the Imputation of a Lye.

BUT to put an End to these Illustrations, *Rahab's* receiving, concealing, and conveying away the Spies; was all a crafty Management, assisted, and carried on by an untrue Suggestion. For she said, *There* Joshua ii.  
*came Men unto me, but whence they were,* 4, 5.  
*I wist not; and when it was dark, the Men*  
*went out, but whither the Men went, I wot*  
*not; pursue after them quickly, for ye shall*  
*overtake them.* And yet she had hid them  
 in her House at the same Time. But notwithstanding, it would be too bold to charge what she said, and did upon this Occasion, with the Guilt, and Odium of a Lye;

S E R M. since the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews*, ascribed  
 X. it to her lively Faith, without any Abate-  
 Chap. xi. ment made to the Circumstances, and re-  
 31. cords her Name with Honour: *By Faith*  
*Rahab perished not, with them that believed*  
*not, when she had receiv'd the Spies in*  
*Peace.* I believe it indeed to be a just Ob-  
 servation, that every Thing that seems to  
 be approved in Scripture, is not rashly to  
 be imitated; either because a small Diffe-  
 rence may make a great Variation, or be-  
 cause a mixt Action, may be commended  
 for the Good that is in it, without any  
 Notice, or Censure of the Evil; or be-  
 cause extraordinary Cases, are not presently  
 to be drawn into Precedent.

BUT I presume, where the Reason of  
 the Thing itself expounds, and justifies the  
 Example, as much as the Example illu-  
 strates the Thing; both together, can hard-  
 ly mislead a Man in his Practice.

AND I take it, it has been sufficiently e-  
 vinced from the Reason of the Thing,  
 that those Deviations from Truth; in  
 Countenance of which, I have produced  
 the forecited Examples; do by no Means  
 carry the Implication, or involve Men in  
 the

the Imputation of a Lye. For they have none of its ill Intentions, or mischievous Effects: They serve the Convenience, Ease, and Safety of those immediately concerned; but they annoy no Body; they help to prevent many, and great Injuries, but they are never instrumental in doing any. In a Word, they make Way for no Abuses, they introduce no evil Habits, nor do they dispose People to use such a Liberty promiscuously; but only where the Exigence, and Honesty of the Case speaks for itself: And therefore, as far, as it appears to me; they are neither liable to the Accusation of Guilt, nor the Suspicion of Inconvenience.

BUT I would not be so mistaken, as if I were now apologizing for a Lye; and allowing that Scope to it here, which I had before so rigidly denied to it. For the Practice I have been last speaking of, is of a quite different Hue from a Lye; altho' indeed the very Shadow of a Lye is enough to darken, and discolour the most innocent Action; and this I do imagine, has helped to perplex the present Question. For Men have been wont unaccurately to call every

Z 3

Falshood



SERM. Falshood a Lye; and under that Notion,  
 X. no Wonder, that they have included both  
 under the same Sentence: Whereas, if  
 People would be at the Pains to distinguish that which is a formal Lye, from that which wants the very essential Property; viz. an injurious Deceitfulness; if they would not disgrace an inoffensive Thing, with a Name of very ill Sound; all Scruples would vanish upon this Head; and every Body would be equally convinced, that as a wilful Lyar may wickedly pervert the Truth itself, and force it to do the vile Office of a Lye; so an honest and ingenuous Man, may happily accommodate a simple Falshood, to the better Purposes of Truth, and Justice.

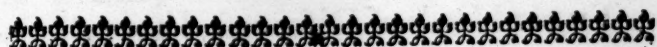
*Now to God the Father, &c.*

SERMON



# S E R M O N XI.

The Nature of Truth, and Fal-  
shood consider'd.



EPHES. iv. 25.

*Wherefore putting away Lying,  
speak every Man Truth with his  
Neighbour; for we are Members  
one of another.*



IN discoursing upon these Words, S E R M.  
the Method I proposed, was IX.

I. *First*, To enquire into  
the Nature, and Formality of a Lye.

Z 4

II. *Secondly*,

SERM.

XI.

II. *Secondly*, To lay open the Turpitude, and Baseness of it in General.

III. *Thirdly*, THE particular Malignity of most of the several Sorts of Lyes, that commonly pass up and down, and make Mischief in the World.

IV. *Fourthly*, To examine, whether all Lying be universally forbidden.

V. *Fifthly*, WHETHER every Deviation from Truth, does involve Men in the Imputation of a Lye, and is to be condemned as such.

THESE Heads of Discourse, I have already considered. It only now remains, that in the

VI. *Sixth*, and *Last* Place I do enquire, how far we are bound to keep to exact Truth; and upon a just Occasion to declare it.

AND the Reason why I make a Question of this, is; partly because the general Obligation to Truth, does not immediately imply, that every Deviation from it must needs pass for a Lye; (as I proved by several Instances under my last Head of Discourse) and partly because it is not necessarily incumbent upon us, by Virtue of  
that

that Obligation, in all Cases, to declare SERM.  
what we know to be true. How far there- XI.  
fore we are bound up in these Respects, is  
the present Question. And

*First,* As to the former Part of the Que-  
stion, namely, how far we are obliged to  
keep exactly to the Truth, in any of our  
voluntary Declarations, or Assertions, or  
in Answer to a legal Examination; it will  
admit, I think, of this general Resolution;  
to wit, that we are so far ty'd up to speak  
the Truth, with all possible Strictness;  
as the Right, and Interest of our Neigh-  
bour is in any Ways concerned in it: But  
on the other Hand, where no Body's Right  
is infringed, no Body's Interest prejudiced,  
(but rather more effectually promoted per-  
haps, than otherwise it could be) there I  
suppose we are permitted to use a modest,  
discreet, and charitable Liberty; such a  
Liberty as I was pleading for, under my  
last Head; a Liberty instrumental in do-  
ing much Good, but obstructing none;  
and in preventing much Mischief, but pro-  
curing none.

AND they are only such Cases as these,  
in which Truth is capable of being dis-  
pens'd



S E R M. pensed with; that is, wherein there is no  
 XI. Right to Truth existing, or at least, where-  
 in that Right is ceased *pro Tempore*.

GIVE me Leave to refresh your Memories, with an additional Instance, or two of this Sort.

SUPPOSE then a Robber, should break a House in the Dead of the Night, and with a Pistol presented to the Head of the Owner, demand of him where the Bulk of his Money and Plate, might be found; he need not scruple sure, if his Presence of Mind will serve him, and it may consist with his Safety; to direct him, where he will meet with the least Booty, and to persuade him if he can, that that's all he is like to find.

AND the Reason is evidently this, the Robber can have no Right, (that's without all Dispute) to carry off another Man's Goods by Violence; and therefore he can have no Right to be truly informed about them, to that End. And 'tis not to be imagined indeed, that he, who contrary to the Laws of all Society forcibly invades the Property of another; should be entitled to the Information of Truth, (which

was

*and Falshood consider'd.*

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was designed only for the better Maintenance of Society) and that in order purely to make his illegal Force, still more inju-

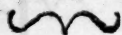
S E R M.  
XI.  
~

rious; and his unrighteous Gains the greater. In a Word, where there could be no Right, there could be no Wrong; and therefore he that can deceive a Thief in such a Case, may; for he may rest satisfied in this, that he can never wrongfully defraud him.

SUPPOSE again, a City to be straitly begirt, and fore distressed, for Want both of Succours and Sustainance; I think in that Case, the Casuists always allow a Liberty to amuse the Enemy, with feigned Reports, and false Boasts of their Strength, and Sufficiency, and to make Use of any crafty Stratagem they can devise, that may be of Service, or Relief to themselves; though altogether inconsistent with the Truth. Thus did *Elisha* the Prophet deal with the *Affyrians*, who were smitten with Blindness, that they could not see him, when they were sent to seize him. He took them Captive under Pretence of being a Guide to them. *This is not the Way* <sup>2 Kings</sup>  
(says he) *neither this the City, follow me, I* <sup>vi. 19.</sup>  
*will*

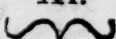
SERM. *will bring you to the Man whom ye seek, but*

XI. *be led them to Samaria.*



AND this, and such Practices as this, may be sufficiently justified, 'tis thought, from the very State, and Exigency of Things in Time of War. For when People are at open Hostility one with another, they are upon quite different Terms, than when they are mutually engaged in Treaty of Peace, or Alliance. That Trust, and Confidence which was created by solemn Stipulation, in one Case; is actually dissolv'd in the other. The Appeal is now directly to the Sword, and whether that be managed by mere Force, or cunning Slight, it makes no Difference. For certainly a greater Evil cannot be more justified, than a less; and therefore, if it be lawful to kill an Enemy outright, much more is it so to deceive him, though it be to his very great Hurt. For in short, where a Trust is once dissolved, (as between declared Enemies it is) there (so long as their Hostility shall last) the Obligation to perform it, ceases on the one Side; and the Right to expect the Performance of it, ceases likewise on the other. And in this Respect

spect they are both upon the Level, as be-  
ing equally at Liberty to lay hold of any  
Advantage of Arms, or of Art, openly, or  
secretly, as it shall happen to present it  
self.

SERM.  
XI.  


ONLY this is heedfully to be observed;  
that there can be no Room left for any  
such Liberty, when Enemies come to treat,  
and enter into Articles one with another,  
in order to maintain a Truce for a certain  
Time; or to strike up a firm, or settled  
Peace. For there can be no Security, ei-  
ther in a Truce, or a Peace; unless they  
can depend upon one another's Fidelity;  
and the mutual Ratification, and Exchange  
of Articles between them, amounts to the  
most solemn, and public Promise in the  
Face of the whole World; that they will  
each of them for their own Part, most re-  
ligiously observe them. And a Falsifica-  
tion of this Kind, is one of the highest,  
and most shameful Breaches of Trust; be-  
cause it renders the surest Pledges of Faith,  
and Honour, that can pass between Na-  
tion, and Nation, insignificant or insecure;  
and because, if it were once to prevail in  
the World, it would propagate; nay, it  
would



SERM. would perpetuate War and Confusion,  
 XI. without Respite, and without Remedy.

AND here, whatever Flattery may say in Praise of it, (as what will not Flattery praise) I must remark it, that 'tis no Part of the *Hero's* Character; to surprize whole Provinces in the Time of profound Peace, to snatch that by Stealth, which he could not wrest by Force; to make a Shew of entering into public Treaties, the better to carry on clancular Designs; to snap asunder all the sacred Bonds of Truth, and Fealty; with as much Ease, as *Sampson* broke the Withs from his Arms; and, as if it were his only Boast, that there can be nothing of this Kind strong enough to hold him.

I SAY, this can never pass for the Character of a *Hero*: And History is seldom so immodest, as to represent it so; and Posterity seldom so partial as to think it such.

BUT to return, 'tis only in these Cases, that Truth is dispensable, wherein there is no Body who can claim any just Right to it; no Body that can reasonably complain of Wrong, in being deprived of it.

IN all other Cases, where there is any SERM.  
Kind of Right accruing, or any Wrong XI.  
likely to redound; we are undoubtedly ob-  
liged, most strictly to adhere to it.

I SHALL name one or two of the most  
eminent, and those such as constantly oc-  
cur in common Life. And

LET the *First* Instance concern Bar-  
gains and Contracts, and all the Commerce  
maintain'd by Buying and Selling. I say,  
in all Matters of this Nature, we are in-  
dispensably engaged to preserve inviolable  
Truth, in whatever we assert, or pro-  
mise.

FOR all these Matters are transacted be-  
tween such, as are supposed to put a Con-  
fidence in each other, and to deal upon the  
Square together.

AND every Buyer has an indisputable  
Right to receive a good, and valuable Com-  
modity, in Exchange for his Money; and  
to pay no greater Price for that Commo-  
dity, than 'tis really worth, after reasona-  
ble Allowances made, to compensate the  
Skill, the Pains, and the Hazard of the  
Seller.

IN

SERM. IN like Manner, every Seller has an unquestionable Right to receive a rateable Price for his Goods, in true currant Money, and at the Time agreed on; and when once a Bargain is struck betwixt Buyer, and Seller; they are both equally obliged, honestly to fulfil it.

XI.

AND any Deviation from Truth, that serves to draw on a Bargain, or to evade or falsify it, when 'tis once made, is a Deceit, and a Lye, and plainly interferes with that common Right, which Men have to be fairly dealt by, in Buying, and Selling.

THUS in particular, if the Seller oils his Tongue with smooth Words, on Purpose to set a fine Gloss upon his Commodity, to make it pass off, for better than it really is, or for more than it can be worth; his Words are all no other than Snares, and the best that can be said of him is; that he is a plausible Cheat.

BUT if any one has a Mind to acquit himself in this Case, like a plain honest Man; he must be sure never to exceed the Bounds of real Truth, in any Thing that he says, either to set off the Goodness of his

his Commodity, or to obtain his Price for S E R M.  
it. For *whatsoever is more than this*, (as XI.  
our Saviour said upon another Occasion) Mat. v. 37.  
*cometh of Evil.*

THUS again on the other Hand, if one well skilled in antient Coins, and Medals; should light upon some such in the Hands of a Person altogether unacquainted with them; and taking Advantage of his Ignorance, should industriously persuade him, that they are but Copper, when they are Gold, in order to get them into his own Possession upon the easier Terms; I say, such an insidious Buyer as this, is only fit to deal with the Merchant's last mentioned: For they are both Cheats, and abound in Words of Deceit, calculated purely for their own Advantage, without any Regard to Right, or Wrong.

AND I reckon of all Things, an honest Man should not make Use of his Skill, to lead an ignorant Person into an Error; that he intends to profit by himself. I should rather think in such a Case, that he would forfeit the Reputation of his Honesty, if he did not first give him faithful Information, even before any Overtures of



SERM. a Bargain; which perhaps also, I may have  
 IX. occasion to prove upon him by and by.

AGAIN, if a Seller produces a Sample of any Sort of Goods, and promises upon Agreement to deliver a certain Quantity of the same Sort of Goods, according to that Sample; he is bound to fulfil his Promise with all possible Exactness: And if he falls short of it, in Respect of Quantity, or Quality; he is liable to make it good, and if he has a Right Sense of Honesty, he will be careful so to do.

FOR I cannot on the Sudden decide, who is the most dishonest of the two; he that roundly promises what he intends not to perform, or he that cares not to perform what he was ready enough to promise.

ONCE more, he that makes a Purchase, and by the Conditions of his Bargain, is obliged to pay the whole Price agreed upon, at a certain Time prefix'd; he ought to be punctual to his Time; because otherwise he is not true to his Word, nor faithful to the Person with whom he contracted; unless he fairly asks, and directly obtains his farther Forbearance.

I

BUT

BUT I need not multiply Particularities; S E R M.  
these that I have mentioned are so well XI.  
known, and so very plain, that they must  
be sufficient to evince; that in Matters of  
Traffic, and Commerce, 'tis by no Means  
allow'd, to recede from rigid Truth, in a-  
ny of our Assertions, or Promises; and the  
Reason is, because it cannot be done with-  
out the manifest Violation of some Body's  
Right; and consequently it is always ac-  
companied with the Malignity, and Inju-  
riousness of a Lye. But

*Secondly*, THE other Instance I shall  
give, shall relate to that Evidence, or Te-  
stimony which People are ordinarily sum-  
moned to give in, before the Judge, or  
some other public Magistrate; and how  
strictly we are tied up to naked, simple  
Truth, on such Occasions, the Tenor of  
the Oath (to that End imposed) as well as  
the Reason of the Thing, will plainly  
shew. For 'tis expressly, and solemnly re-  
quired of us, "That the Evidence we  
" give, be the Truth, the whole Truth,  
" and nothing but the Truth". And Reason  
good; because the least Aberration, 'or Fal-  
sification in any of these Particulars, must

SERM in all Probability prove injurious to some

XI. Body or other; and there is but too much Cause for Suspicion, that it is generally designed so to be.

WE are required to speak the Truth, upon these Occasions; that is, what to the best of our Knowledge, and Recollection, we impartially judge so to be; because otherwise we shall point blank *bear false Witness against our Neighbour*; either by deposing that concerning him, which we know, or think to be false, or at least do not know to be true; both which, may be of infinite ill Consequence to him, and expose him perhaps to that Expence, Loss, Shame, or Punishment which he never deserved.

AN Injury of that Size, that no Man that makes any Conscience of what he says, or does, can ever be guilty of.

BUT 'tis not sufficient, barely to depose the Truth, unless we faithfully relate the whole of it; all that falls within the Compass of our Knowledge, and concerns the Matter in Question. For the mincing, and softening the Evidence, or the Concealment of some material Circumstance, frequently gives a Turn to the whole Cause,

Cause, at least it is too apt to put a wrong Byass upon the Judgment of the Jurors; who are not always the most discerning, but too often inclinable to shew unconfessionable Favours. The Suppression of any Part of the Truth therefore, may hazard to confound Guilt and Innocence, and pervert Right, and Wrong; as much as an Evidence directly false: And therefore 'tis every Whit as injurious. And indeed, when a Man is charged upon Oath to deliver the whole Truth, he is no better than a false perjured Wretch, if he studiously conceals any Particular within his Knowledge.

BUT moreover, it lies upon our Consciences, not to err in the Excess, any more than in the Defect: For we are to speak the whole Truth, but nothing beside the Truth, nothing beyond our Knowledge; we are not to set it off, with any Additions, or Amplifications of our own: No circumstantial Dress, colourably put on, to make the Matter of Fact look better or worse, than nakedly it would. For such Artifices as these, are certainly designed for a Blind: And the ill Influence,



SERM. that they have upon the Cause depending, is not always to be prevented; but to be sure, the Corruptness, and Falseness of *their* Hearts that use them, is never to be excused.

XI.

AND this may suffice to shew, that we are under the most indispensable Obligation, to keep close to simple, undisguised, and uncorrupted Truth, in every Thing we depose, in the Way of Evidence; because we cannot turn aside, either to the right Hand, or to the left, without intrenching upon Justice, Equity, or Charity.

I DON'T here take Notice of the Interposition of an Oath, which is indeed a great Aggravation to the Crime of false Witnessing; but I am now taxing it as a Species of Lying only, and in that Respect I find it to be utterly inexcusable.

AND what shall we say, or think then, of those sworn Enemies, to all Truth, and Honesty; Enemies indeed to every Man's Property, Peace, and Safety; the Suborners, and Instructors, I mean, of false Witness; they that train them up to their Hands, that pay them the Wages of Unrighteousness,

righteousness, and have them always at their Beck whenever their devilish Malice, or Avarice shall prompt them to ruine the innocent, or unwary? These are the *Makers, and the Lovers of Lyes*: They trade in them, they rob, and murder by them; and it is so much their wicked Inclination, and their Business; that they might almost dispute the Title of the Father of Lyes, even with the Devil himself; at least none of his Children can come nearer him, in Resemblance, or Imitation.

ANOTHER Sett of Men there is in the World, who though they are not arrived to that same prodigious Pitch, or Degree of Wickedness, with those last mentioned; yet they have but too many false, and foul Practices to answer for; the Make-baits, I mean; they whose Study, and Employment it is, to sow the Seeds of Contention every where, that they may never want a Harvest themselves; they that are ready to espouse any Quarrel, and hug it as their own, and make it so, rather than fail; and carry it on by all Kind of little Crafts, and sinister Arts; especially by tampering with simple, ignorant Men, (who are to

SERM. be made Witnesses of) by straining their  
 XI. Words, beyond the natural Sense, and the  
 ~~~~~ Intention of those that spoke them; and  
 thence framing a plausible Story, and fitting it to their Mouths, and inculcating it so often upon their Ears, 'till at last they get it by Heart, perhaps believe it, but to be sure fail not to attest it.

THESE Kind of Practicers are they, whose Name is odious, and infamous in the Eye of our Law, as being the Invaders of every one's Right, and Quiet, and the very Pests of Society. And the honourable Profession of the long Robe justly disowns all Relation to them, and is at all Times glad to see them publickly stigmatiz'd.

AND indeed the Law, being so careful as it is, of Property, and so tender of the Subject's Good; could not but hold such villainous Practices in the utmost Detestation.

NAY, I must farther suppose, that as the End of the Law, is to deal equal Justice to all; so it could never intend to commit Errors in the Distribution of Justice; and consequently it could never approve

prove, or willingly admit of any sly Shifts, SERM.
or Evasions; any cunning Fetches, or De- XI.
vices, whereby to delay, obstruct, or per-
vert Judgment. And whensoever any
Thing like this happens, (as Abuses will
creep into all humane Institutions) it must
be perfectly beside the Intention of the
Law; because it is absurd to think, that it
could be founded upon Wrong, or fa-
shioned for Deceit.

SOME of its Forms indeed, do not al-
ways consist of strict, and literal Truth;
but then they are mere Forms, which
mislead no Body's Understanding, nor do
they affect the Merits of the Cause; 'tis
that which appears upon the Proof only,
that is of Moment towards a Decision of
the Matter in Issue: And therefore these
Forms, though they may contain some-
thing untrue, yet they imply nothing that
is deceitful, or injurious; and consequently
they are without the Venome (I presume)
of a malicious Lye.

BUT I remember the Fate of the *Ora-
tor*, who would needs talk of military Af-
fairs before *Hannibal*; and therefore I
shall wade no farther in this Argument:
Nor

SERM. Nor shall I pretend nicely to examine;
 XI. whether 'tis lawful for Pleaders, to undertake the Defence of a bad Cause, or to use any Kind of artificial Colours, Extenuations, Exaggerations, sophistical Reasonings, or the like; or whether, they ought to confine themselves only, to enquire into the Truth of the Fact, from the Mouth of the Witness; and after that, impartially to compare it, as it stands in Proof, with the Law; that so those concerned, may better judge of its Quality, and Deserts.

INSTEAD of examining farther into this Case, I shall only remind you, that that which makes a Fallacy maliciously fraudulent, is its Injuriousness; and that we are so far confined to strict, and simple Truth, as the Right of our Neighbour is any Ways concerned in it, or the Deviation from it, may turn to his Prejudice: And how near that comes to the present Case, 'tis not difficult to discern.

Secondly, IT remains now, that I proceed to the second Part of the general Question, *viz.* How far we are bound to declare, what we know to be true.

BUT

BUT the fewer Words will suffice for SERM.
XI.
this; because the same general Resolution will serve again, and most of the same particular Instances will suit well enough too.

FOR I believe none will dispute, but we are so far bound to declare the Truth, and all we know of it, as our Neighbour's Right may be interested in it; and the Concealment of it may prove prejudicial to him.

ON the contrary, where there can be no Pretence of Right on his Part, nor no Fear of suffering any Wrong for want of being duly informed; there I think we are left at a discretionary Liberty, to suppress the Truth, or any Part of it, as Prudence may seem to advise, or Charity, and Justice require.

THUS, In the Instance formerly mentioned; the conscientious Tradesman is obliged (as I take it) not to conceal any Defect in the Commodity he sells, or else to make a proportionable Abatement for it in the Price; because every Buyer has an undoubted Right to have that which is good for his Money, and not to pay more
for

SERM. for it than it is worth; and therefore an
 XI. industrious Concealment in this Case, is
 no better than a designed Cheat.

AND upon this Occasion, I cannot forbear the Mention of a famous Case in *Tully's* Offices. The Question is; "If a Corn Merchant sails from *Alexandria* to *Rhodes*, in Time of great Scarcity, and Famine; and knows at the same Time, that there are a considerable Number of Ships with Corn in their Passage thither; shall he conceal it in order to enhance his own Price; or shall he not?"

"No, if *Cicero* be any Casuist, by no Means! his very Silence in that Case, shall not be innocent; because 'tis industriously to conceal that, which he knows himself; from those, whom it nearly concerns to know it too; purely for a little sordid *Lucre's* Sake.

AND our Author, not content barely to decide the Question against the crafty Merchant, expresses his Indignation against the Man, and his Practice *.

* Hoc autem celandi Genus quale sit, & cujus Nominis, quis non videt? Certe non aperti, non simplicis, non in-

THAT in short, 'tis a knavish Con-
cealment he says, and he bestows all the
ill Names upon him that practises it, that
he can think of on the Sudden.

SERM.
XI.
~

If any one shall object, that this is too
rigid to assert in Doctrine, and too unrea-
sonable to require in Practice; I must
leave the false hearted *Christian* to dispute
the Point, (if he will) with the honest
Heathen; and to give better Reasons for it
(if he can) than he has done against it.

In the mean Time, I can but pass the
same Judgment ('till I be better satisfied)
upon the designing Purchaser of the Me-
dals above mentioned. For unless he first
plainly informs the Owner of them, what
they are, and what Value the Curious ge-
nerally put upon them; and then tells
him he will give as much for them, as an-
other Man shall; I say, if he does not
make this Discovery to him first; it is e-
vident, he must have an underhand De-

genui, non justii, non viri Boni: Versuti potius, obscuro, a-
stuti, fallacis, maliciosi, callidi, veteratoris, vafri. L. 3.
Officior. Vol. X. Edit. Gronov. 12^o. p. 4059.

sign,

SERM. sign, of getting them from him for little,
 XI. or nothing; *i. e.* in plain Terms, of cheating him of his just Due.

I HAVE already in the Course of my Argument, had Occasion to observe; that the stifling any Part of the Truth in a legal Evidence, (where the Tenor of the Oath, as well as the Nature of the Thing obliges us to declare the whole) is as perfidious, and often as injurious, as downright Falshood, or Forgery.

I SHALL only add upon this Head; that all Equivocations, and mental Reservations, upon Examinations had before a lawful Magistrate, are utterly to be condemned; because they are invented on Purpose, maliciously to suppress the Truth, and detain that from those, who are legally impow'ed to take Cognisance of it: They mock all their Vigilance; they vacate the most engaging Promises, they elude the strictest Laws, they loosen the sacred Bonds of Oaths; and in a Word, they undermine the Peace, and Safety of all Governments.

TIS notorious therefore, that the Suppression of the Truth, by such collusive Means, is justly chargeable with all the vilest

vilest Qualities, and worst Effects of a SERM.
Lye; and when People insidiously lie in XI.
Wait to deceive; it is an indifferent Thing,
whether they compass their End by Falsities and Fictions, or a confident Denial of the Truth; or by studied Ambiguities, and latent Reserves, contrived only to reconcile two Things, that are incompatible; *i. e.* Truth, and Falshood.

GIVE me leave to put an End to these Examples, with but one more, that concerns Religion; and that is, in Case God should in his good Providence, call us to Witness the Confession of a true Faith, in Times of Trial, and Persecution; without all Peradventure, in that Case we are obliged to do it, with all Frankness, and Openness; or without any Colour, or Concealment whatsoever.

IN Justice to the Truth, and in Honour to God, we ought to do it, and we are shameful Revolters if we do not; *For with the Heart, Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth, Confession is made unto Salvation*; this is the proper Way of bearing Testimony, to the Truth of our holy Religion, when we are put to the
Question;

SER M. Question; and whosoever is ashamed to
 XI. own it; *of him also shall the Son of Man be*
 ~~~~~ *ashamed, when he cometh in his Glory*; be-  
 cause, besides the Treachery of his own  
 Heart, he lays a stumbling Block in the  
 Way of the Weak, and tempts the timo-  
 rous to the like *Apostasy* with himself.  
 For the *Libellatici* of Old, who were wil-  
 ling to have it thought, that they denied  
*Christ*, though they really did not; were  
 censured as downright *Apostates*, by the  
 zealous Fathers of the Church.

AND People are under the same Obliga-  
 tion, to render a fair, and candid Account  
 of their Faith (if required to't by their Su-  
 periors) when they have given Scandal to  
 the Church of God, by the Suspicion of  
*Heresy*. And this they are bound to do,  
 with all Simplicity, and Plainness; not dis-  
 guising their Errors under any Likeness of  
 Sound, or equivocal Expression; which  
 was the disingenuous Artifice of the *Ar-*  
*rians* in former Days, whereby they mock-  
 ed all the provident Care, and Zeal of  
 their Governors, and silyly instilled their  
*heretical* Opinions, into the Minds of many,  
 that were honest, and undesigning.

BUT

BUT to draw to a Period; the plain S E R M.  
Result of all the aforementioned Instances, XI.  
is this; that wheresoever our Duty towards  
God, or (as it most commonly happens)  
to our Neighbour, may exact it from us;  
there we are obliged to an explicate Decla-  
ration of the Truth, so far forth, as any  
Body has a manifest Interest in it, or can  
make out a just Claim to it.

BUT on the contrary, where there is  
no Body interested in it, no Body entitled  
to it; it cannot be wrong to withhold it,  
and to blab it, possibly it may.

'Tis too late to prove this now by  
fresh Instances; and in so clear a Point,  
these few Hints may suffice.

No Man, as I take it, is obliged to di-  
vulge his own Secrets, to every inquisitive,  
busy Body: For Curiosity alone can cre-  
ate no Right; and therefore not to gratify  
it is no Wrong.

AGAIN, no Man is obliged to give a di-  
rect Answer to an ensnaring Question; for  
Malice, and Treachery can create no  
Right; and for an honest Man not to be-  
tray himself, is no Wrong sure to his in-  
sidious Neighbour.



SERM.

XI.

AGAIN, no Man is bound to expose his own secret Infirmities to the World; for no Body is bound to bring Contempt upon himself; and who is it, that can pretend to claim it from him? *Lastly*, no Man is bound to publish every Trip, or failing of his Neighbour; especially when there is Hope of his Amendment: For what Obligation can there be for any Man to be uncharitable? In these Cases therefore, and such like Cases as these are; the Concealment of Truth is so far from being injurious, that it would be rash, and foolish, and oftentimes mischievous to declare it.

AND now to conclude all, let us listen to the *Apostle's* Exhortation, and *put away Lying*: For a Lye is the Offspring of the Devil, and an Abomination to God; 'tis put into the Catalogue, with the most heinous Sins, that the Scripture takes any Notice of; and included in the same Sentence with them. 'Tis fruitful of Abundance of Mischief, and destructive, both of the Obligations, and Ends of all Society. In a Word, it is in its very Nature deceitful, and hurtful, or at least fatally fitted so to be; and therefore all Manner of Lying is most certainly unlawful.

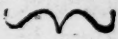
AND

AND though every Deviation from Truth, has not always the Formality of a Lye, because sometimes a simple Falshood may be better accommodated to the better Purposes of Truth, and Justice, and Charity; and the very Deceit itself may help to prevent the Injury; I say, notwithstanding this, let us still hold ourselves obliged, to adhere religiously to the Truth, wherever the Right, or Interest of our Neighbour may be in any wise concerned in it. For 'tis certain, there can be no Dispensation to defraud any Man of his just Right, in any Case whatsoever. And again, though it is not in all Cases required of us to impart to others all that we know to be true ourselves; yet still where it affects any Body's Right, or Interest, let us think it (as it is) our Duty so to do; and let us upon a just Occasion, be ready to do it freely, and fairly; without any Kind of artificial Disguise, or sly Evasion.

IN a Word, let us all remember that *we are Members one of another*, and that (as such) we have in all ordinary Cases, a common Right to Truth; and in those excepted Cases, where it may be lawful, and

S E R M. useful to recede from it, or in any Degree  
 XI. to suppress, or conceal it; it lies upon us  
 still to be extremely tender of interfering  
 with any Body's Right, or doing the least  
 Wrong; for though every Untruth does  
 not immediately deserve the Name of a  
 Lye; much less every Concealment of the  
 Truth; yet whenever the one, or the other  
 apparently is, or is likely to prove injurious,  
 then it puts on the Nature, and Quality of a  
 Lye; and as such must scrupulously be a-  
 voided.

BUT I hope I need not spend many  
 Words in pressing a Point, that carries its  
 own Conviction with it. For the World  
 (bad as it is) is not so profligate, as to  
 entertain any good Opinion of Lying:  
 And few Parents (I believe) or Masters of  
 Families, think it to be a laudable, or in-  
 deed an excusable Thing in their Children,  
 or Domesticks. They are too sensible, that  
 it betokens the greatest Baseness, and Dis-  
 ingenuity; that it destroys the very Princi-  
 ples of all Honesty, and confounds the  
 Difference of Right, and Wrong; that it  
 undermines the very Foundation of all  
 Trust, and Confidence. In a Word, that  
 2 the

the customary Habit of it disposes People S E R M.  
by Degrees to do any the vilest Action, or XI.  
commit any the most detestable Villany. 

I may take it for granted therefore, that every Man is willing to have so pernicious a Practice discountenanced in his own Family, for Fear of being encompassed about with Lyars; *i. e.* with Tale-bearers, and Slanderers, Parasites, and Sycophants, Cheats and Thieves, Traitors, and Villains; for a thorough-paced Lyar, as the Scene shifts, is ready to act his Part in all these Capacities. And doubtless, it is as much (and more) every one's Interest, and Duty to disapprove, censure, and punish all Lying without Doors, as well as within: In Regard a City, or Nation full of such Lyars, must be abundantly worse than a House full. And indeed, when once this Pestilence of the Tongue becomes *epidemical*, (as God knows 'tis but too much so) no Man can promise himself any Security in his good Name, Estate, or any Thing that he enjoys; or any Quiet in the Neighbourhood where he lives, or any Comfort in his own Innocence; for all is still at the Lyar's Mercy; *whose Mouth is full of Curfing, and*



S E R M. *Bitterness, Deceit and Fraud, Mischief and*

XI.

*Vanity; whose Throat is an open Sepulchre,*

Rom. iii. *whose inward Parts are very Wickedness,*

13, 14, *whose Feet are swift to shed Blood; and in*

15, 16.

*all whose Ways are Misery, and Destruction.*

And 'tis an Evil, that we have of late much groaned under; an Evil (to our Shame be it spoken) that is almost become national among us. Time was, when we did pretend to something of Character, and Figure in the World, to be a People of Honour, and Integrity. But whatever we have been, we are now ('tis too notorious to be denied) for ought I know, the most of any People in *Christendom*, addicted to lye to one another, and of one another; we make Lyes, and we love Lyes, and we abound in them of all Sorts and Sizes, and fitted to all Ends, and Purposes; we use them as Weapons of Defence, and Offence; to support, and advance our-selves, or to supplant, and overthrow those, whom we hate or envy; and we level them, not only at particular Persons, but at whole Orders, and Professions, at considerable Bodies and Societies of Men; we spare no Dignity, no Innocence, no Authority, be  
it

it never so high, or sacred; and confident, S E R M.  
and shameless Lying is the universal En- XI.  
gine, to batter down all that stands be-  
fore it.

'Tis a *fore Evil under the Sun* this; and  
oh! that we could find an effectual Re-  
medy for it! Oh that Men would be per-  
suaded for their own Sakes, never to in-  
dulge a Lye in themselves or others, in  
Jest or Earnest, in a Great Matter or a lit-  
tle! For the Practice of it in Jest, will be  
but too apt to introduce the Habit in good  
Earnest; and the Indulgence of it in a  
small Matter, will in Time make a Breach  
in the Conscience, wide enough for the  
greatest Sin to find its Entrance at.

OH therefore, that Men would suffer  
themselves to be made sensible, that they  
are supposed by the Tenor of their baptis-  
mal Vow, to have *put off the old Man with  
his Deeds*, of which this is one of the most  
notorious; and to have renounced the Devil,  
and all his Works; of which this is the most  
properly diabolical; then one would imagine  
they would not be difficult to be persuaded  
to follow the *Apostle's* excellent Advice in  
the Text; of *putting away Lying, and*  
B b 4 *speaking*

SERM. *speaking every Man Truth with his Neigh-*  
XI. *bour.* Which that we may all of us do,  
God of his infinite Mercy grant, in and  
through *Jesus Christ* our Lord; to whom  
with the Father, and Holy Spirit be ascri-  
bed (as is due) all Praise, Glory, Might,  
Majesty, and Dominion, now and for ever.  
*Amen.*

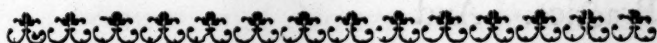


SERMON



## S E R M O N XII.

The Nature of Godly Zeal con-  
sider'd.



ROM. xii. latter Part of the 11<sup>th</sup>  
Verse.

*Fervent in Spirit, serving the  
Lord.*



OUR learned Paraphrast up- S E R M.  
on the *New Testament* XII.  
\* understands these Words \*Dr. Ham-  
of St. Paul, of that earn- mond.  
est Degree of Affection to  
God's Service, that will inflame, and set  
us most ardently about it, and prompt us  
to



SER M. to do those Things, that in Respect of the  
 XII. Circumstances of Time, and Place, may  
 most tend to the Honour of God, and the  
 Building up of his Church.

AND according to this Sense of the  
 Words, shall I frame my Discourse at pre-  
 sent, and endeavour,

I. *First*, To represent to you, the Na-  
 ture, and Qualifications of a godly Zeal, or  
 a Fervour in God's Service.

II. *Secondly*, To recommend it to your  
 Practice. And

III. *Thirdly*, To give you some special  
 Directions for the more laudable Exercise  
 of it. And

I. *First*, THE better to acquaint you  
 with the Nature of godly Zeal, give me  
 leave to set it before you under this De-  
 scription; *viz.* that it is a hearty, and an  
 affectionate Concern for the Service, and  
 Honour of God, and an earnest Desire,  
 and Study to promote it; upon good  
 Grounds, by lawful, prudent, and proper  
 Methods, and in such Manner as is de-  
 cent, and fitting.

WHICH

WHICH Description, if I misapprehend it not, will help us in a great Measure to conceive what it is, that constitutes the very Essence of Zeal; what its inseparable Properties are, or ought to be; and wherein it stands plainly differenced, both from the direct Opposites to it, and the indirect Abuses of it.

AND this I imagine will be evident enough to any Body, that has the Patience to attend to it, and examine it. For first to satisfy your Enquiry, about the general Nature, and Notion of it; it is according to the Description given, a Concern for the Service, and Honour of God, together with a Desire, and Study to promote it: A Concern, that is a solicitous Care for, and a particular Regard to it, habitually rooted in the Mind, and springing from the full bent of the Inclinations; and expressing, and exerting itself in several Acts suitable to the several Occasions, that may present themselves. For Zeal is not purely a sudden *Impetus*, or Start in Devotion, a feverish hot Fit of Religion, that is owing to some extraordinary Ferment, or Commotion: But 'tis a serious, steddy, religious Principle,

SERM. Principle, that is as coolly, and deliberately taken up, as 'tis warmly, and resolutely pursued. And it is particularly distinguished, both by the Object, that it is conversant about, and the End at which it aims: The Object is the Honour, and Service of God; the End is the Promotion, and Advancement of the same. The Object sanctifies the Principle, and makes it properly a Principle, or Habit of Religion; and the End, whilst constantly kept in View, influences, and determines the Practice, and makes it properly an Act, or Exercise of Religion.

IF it be employ'd about any other Object besides God's Honour, and Service, it is no longer godly Zeal, but commences Vanity, or Folly, Superstition or Will-worship, and does indeed defeat the End, it would pretend to aim at; prophaning God's Honour, and alienating it from him, instead of advancing it. And if it be levelled at any other End besides the Promotion of God's Honour, it therein betrays itself, and apparently proceeds from a wrong Principle; not from any real Concern for God, or Religion, but from some corrupt Lust, and Affection,

some

Godly Zeal consider'd.

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some carnal Reason, some secular Interest, S E R M.  
or Motive. And therefore XII.

*Secondly*, It is to be observed too into the Description of Zeal, that it is a hearty and affectionate Concern for God's Honour, and Service. For doubtless true Zeal ought to be accompanied with Sincerity of Heart, as well as Vehemency, and Ardour of Affection; otherwise it deserves not so commendable a Name; for without a sincere, honest Intention, it is no better than hypocritical Pretence, and the base Counterfeit of an excellent Virtue.

*Jehu* is a famous Instance of this pretended Zeal. *Come with me*, (said he to 2 Kings  
*Jehonadab*) *and see my Zeal for the Lord*; x. 16.  
as a Proof of which, he by Stratagem circumvented the Priests, and Worshippers of *Baal*; and destroy'd them, and their Idol out of *Israel*. But yet 'tis manifest, he was not so zealous for the Lord, as he made Shew of, *to walk in the Law of the* Ver. 31.  
*Lord God of Israel, with all his Heart*; *neither departed he from the Sin of Jeroboam, which made Israel to Sin*. Out of Popularity indeed, he demolished the Image,



SERM. mage, and Temple of *Baal*; but in the

XII. Falseness of his Heart, he fell down at the same Time, and worshipped the golden Calves, and both countenanced, and practised the same Idolatry, though in another Shape.

AND the *Pharisees* in our Saviour's Days, stand branded upon Record, for just such Kind of hypocritical Zealots. They loved to *sound a Trumpet before their Alms, and to stand Praying in the Synagogues, and in the Streets, that they might be seen of Men.* Thus did their Zeal evaporate into vain Glory. *They could devour Widows Houses, and for a Pretence make long Prayers.* Thus was their Zeal made a Cloak to their Knavery, and Extortion. They could hale the Woman, that was taken in the Act of Adultery, before the blessed *Jesus*, as if the Spirit of *Phinehas* had been upon them; and they could not have endured such Wickedness to go one Moment unpunish'd. But the *Evangelist* tells us; *this they did to tempt him, that they might have something to accuse him of,* so much more was their Indignation against the Innocent, than the Guilty. And their false Zeal, was employ'd

John viii.  
6.

Godly Zeal consider'd.

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ploy'd only to be the more dexterous Instru-  
ment of their Malice, and Perfidious-  
ness. SERM.  
XII.

I PRODUCE these Instances, (as I might many more) only to shew, that Sincerity of Heart, is an essential Ingredient in godly Zeal; which if you once separate from it, its Beauty, and Excellency are quite lost, and it is but the painted Vice of Hypocrisy, under a specious Name, and sanctified Appearance.

*Thirdly*, BUT moreover, it belongs to the Nature of Zeal, not only to be sincerely, and heartily, but to be very tenderly, and affectionately concerned for the Honour, and Service of God; *to be fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord*; as the Text expresseth it. And this Fervour is in Truth, the very distinguishing Property of Zeal, whereby it stands oppos'd to a total Unconcernedness, or a lukewarm Indifference about religious Matters. Which latter is what the Church of *Laodicea* in particular is tax'd with by St. *John*, and 'tis a Temper that he represents as odious, and loathsome as it were to God, for so the Spirit had directed him to write; *because*

SERM. *cause thou art lukewarm, and neither hot*  
 XII. *nor cold, I will spue thee out of my Mouth.*

Rev. iii. In Opposition to which, it is added pre-  
 16. sently after: *Be zealous therefore, and re-*  
 Ver. 19. *pent.* Zeal therefore, according to its very

Composition, is animated, and acted by a warm, and vigorous Affection. But 'tis a mixed Affection, consisting of several simple Passions, each of them occasionally exercised, according as the Object is differently view'd, or apprehended; and all of them conspiring to the same End; to wit the Furtherance of God's Glory, and his true Religion. The radical Passion, and that which enkindles, and furnishes Fuel to all the Rest, is the ardent Love of God; and this naturally excites a vehement Desire, and singular Delight to please him, and bring Honour to his holy Name; by devoting ourselves more peculiarly to his Service, by a constant Attendance upon his Ordinances, by a circumspect, and unblameable Conversation, and by the shining Light of a good Example; that may provoke others with a pious Emulation to glorify God as we do. Such was the Operation of holy *David's* Zeal, he loved the

the Salvation of the Lord; and therefore SERM. XII.  
 was disposed himself, and was prompting  
 others continually to say, *Let the Lord be  
 magnified.* The very Desire of his Soul (as Pf. xl. 16.  
*Isaiah* expresses it) was to the Name of Chap. xxvi. 8.  
 the Lord, and to the Remembrance of it.

And he himself expresses the Earnestness,  
 and Ardor, both of his Love, and Desire  
 in these lively Words: *How amiable are* Pf. lxxxiv. 1, 2, 10.  
*thy Tabernacles thou Lord of Hosts; My Soul*  
*longeth, yea even fainteth for the Courts of*  
*the Lord: My Heart, and my Flesh crieth*  
*out for the living God. For a Day in thy*  
*Courts is better than a Thousand: I had ra-*  
*ther be a Door Keeper, in the House of my*  
*God, than to dwell in the Tents of Wicked-*  
*ness.* And in another Place he cries out:  
*I have longed after thy Precepts; and my* Pf. cxix. 40.  
*Delight is in thy Law, and in thy Testimo-*  
*nies.*

AND thus zealously was he affected in  
 Behalf of others, as well as himself. So  
 it appears from the 122<sup>d</sup> Psalm; where he  
 testifies his Joy for the publick, and peace-  
 able Opportunity of worshipping God, and  
 the Readiness of the People to join with  
 him in it: *I was glad* (says he) *when they*



SERM said unto me, let us go into the House of the  
 XII. Lord; our Feet shall stand within thy Gates,  
 O Jerusalem! And then he adds his fervent Prayers and Vows, his utmost Endeavours for the future Establishment of  
 Ver. 8, 9. God's Church. *For my Brethren, and Companions Sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee; because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek thy Good.*

AND to shew how regardful, and desirous he was of the Salvation of others, as well as that of his own Soul, he sues out his own Pardon in the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm, upon this very Condition; and binds himself by a Vow to be an Instrument in the Conversion of other Sinners. *Restore unto me the Joy of thy Salvation (says he) and uphold me with thy free Spirit; then will I teach Transgressors thy Ways, and Sinners shall be converted unto thee.*  
 Ver. 12, 13.

AND this zealous Love of God, which enflames the pious Soul, with such a vehement Desire to promote his Honour; and affords such a sensible Joy, and so great a Complacency in being happily instrumental towards it; is no less apt to conceive a just Indignation, and to be touched

touch'd with Grief, Hatred, and Abhor-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
rence, when provok'd thereunto by the <sup>XII.</sup>  
grievous Prophanation of God's holy Name,  
by the continual Encrease of daily Impie-  
ty, or the obstinate Opposition that is  
made against all Endeavours for a Re-  
formation.

THUS was *David* again heated with ho-  
ly Indignation, when he breaks out into  
that pathetic Complaint: *My Zeal hath* <sup>Pf. cxix.</sup>  
*consumed me, because mine Enemies have* <sup>139.</sup>  
*forgotten thy Words.* Heavily displeased,  
and highly incens'd he was; not so much  
at the Malice, as at the Folly, and Wick-  
edness of his Enemies; that they should  
disobey God's heavenly Will, and neglect  
their plain Duty founded upon natural Ju-  
stice, and Equity.

IT was under the like Provocation, and  
with the same Resentments, that the holy  
*Jesus* drove the prophane Crew of Buyers,  
and Sellers, and Money-Changers out of  
the Temple. And his Disciples understood  
it to be as it was, the Effect of his extra-  
ordinary Zeal, and therefore they readily  
apply'd that propheticall Passage in the

SER. M. 69<sup>th</sup> Psalm to it. *The Zeal of thy House  
XII. hath eaten me up.*

Ver. 9.

THUS again, the *Psalmist* counts it Matter of great Lamentation, and Humiliation, nay even of Fear, and Trembling to himself, that the Degeneracy of the Age, and the Corruption of Manners was so universal. *Rivers of Waters* (cries he) *run down mine Eyes, because they keep not thy Laws; and Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the Wicked that forsake thy Law.*

Pf. cxix.  
136.

Pf. cxix.  
53.

THUS bitterly also does the Prophet *Jeremy* lament over the desperate Wickedness, and deplorable Miseries of his Time. *Ob that mine Head* (says he) *were Waters, and mine Eyes a Fountain of Tears, that I might weep Day and Night for the Slain of the Daughter of my People. Ob! that I had in the Wilderneck a lodging Place of Way-faring Men, that I might leave my People, and go from them; for they be all Adulterers, an Assembly of treacherous Men.*

Jer. ix, 1,  
2.

BUT at the same Time, that good Men out of pure Zeal are so inwardly grieved, that the Honour of God should be so boldly intrenched upon, and moved with  
the

the tenderest Compassion for the Souls of S E R M.  
those, who are so wilfully destroying them- XII.  
selves. I say at the same Time, they can-  
not but look upon the perverse Ways, and  
wicked Courses of incorrigible Sinners, with  
the utmost Averſation, and Abhorrence.  
Such we find were *David's* Sentiments a-  
gain in the 139<sup>th</sup> *Pſalm*, where he makes  
this Appeal to God himſelf. *Do not I hate* Ver. 21,  
*them O Lord that hate thee? And am not* 22.  
*I griev'd with thoſe that riſe up againſt*  
*thee? I hate them with a perfect Hatred:*  
*I count them mine Enemies.* That is, I ut-  
terly deſect, and abominate not their Per-  
ſons, but their Practices, with which I  
am as nearly touch'd, and as much incen-  
ſed, as if they were the moſt ſpightful In-  
juries, or Inſolences done to myſelf.

AND accordingly, it appears in the  
101<sup>st</sup> *Pſalm*, to have been his firm Reſo-  
lution, and his ſolemn Vow to God; that  
he would in his Perſon, and Family, and  
Government, take all poſſible Care to en-  
courage, and advance Virtue, and to ſuffer  
none but the Lovers, and Practiſers of it,  
to enjoy any Share of his Favour; and on  
the other Hand to diſcountenance, and ſup-



S E R M. preſs Vice, and chaſtiſe its Abettors, and  
 XII. Profelytes, with the ſtricteſt Severity, and  
 Rigour.

AND thus far we have ſeen, that Zeal is not only a real, and a hearty, but an affectionate Concern for God's Honour, and Service, founded upon a moſt ardent Love of God, and inſpired with a vehement Deſire to ſanctify, and glorify his moſt holy Name; and attended with a peculiar Delight in ſeeing it done, or in any Meaſure promoted by ourſelves, or others. And on the other Hand, fired with a juſt Indignation, at the Boldneſs, and Growth, and Encroachment of Wickedneſs; and afflicted with a painful Senſe of Grief, and a jealous Fear, both with Reſpect to the Diſhonour that it reflects upon God, and the Deſtruction that it brings upon Mens Souls; and wrought up to a perfect Detestation of ſuch impious, and ruinous Courſes. All which ſeveral Paſſions do in their Turns contribute, as the Occaſion may require, or deſerve, or admit, to that moſt excellent, and deſirable End, of advancing the Glory, and adding to the Credit, and Power of Religion. But to proceed.

*Fifthly,*

*Fifthly*, THIS affectionate Concern for S E R M.  
 God's Honour, ought to commence upon XII.  
 good Grounds, and be guided by sound  
 Judgment; otherwise we may happen to  
 to err grossly about the very Object of our  
 Zeal, and misplace it upon some vain Idol  
 of our own Imagination. Either as fan-  
 cying something to be chiefly conducive to  
 the Glory of God, that perhaps is least so,  
 if not a plain Diminution to it; or else on  
 the contrary, as suspecting something to be  
 offensive to God, and injurious to his Ho-  
 nour, and opposing it fiercely as such,  
 without sufficient Reason.

TAKE a remarkable Example of this  
 prejudicated Zeal, from the *Pharisees*, in  
 our *Saviour's* Time; who, as zealous Stick-  
 lers as they pretended to be for the Law,  
 plainly defeated the Design of it, and eva-  
 cuated one of the most acknowledged Duties  
 in all natural Religion, out of a very religious  
 Respect no Doubt, to a certain Tradition  
 amongst them; *Whosoever shall say to his* Mat. xv.  
*Father, or Mother, it is a Gift by which* 5, 6.  
*thou mightest be profited by me, and honour*  
*not his Father, or Mother, he shall be free.*  
 And this they obtruded upon the People,

S E R M. under the Colour of divine Authority;  
 XII. but *in Vain did they worship God, teaching  
 for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.*  
 For their Zeal was built upon the grossest  
 Error imaginable, if they did indeed give  
 Credit to such a senseless Tradition; and  
 on the strangest hypocritical Self-Delusion,  
 if they did not.

AND NOT unlike to this, is that other  
 Mat. xxiii. Practice of theirs, of *paying Tythe of Mint,  
 23. Annis, and Cummin,* with a scrupulous  
 Exactness; and at the same Time, *omitting  
 the weightier Matters of the Law, Judg-  
 ment, Mercy, and Faith.* For it was a  
 fond, and absurd Conceit to think, that  
 God was chiefly pleased with these lesser  
 Punctilio's, or that the Observance of these  
 might compensate for the Omission of  
 what was much more material.

ST. Paul himself, was a wonderful In-  
 stance of this blind, bigotted Zeal, before  
 he was converted: For he tells us of him-  
 Gal. i. 14. self, that *he was exceedingly zealous of the  
 Traditions of his Fathers.* Nay he scruples  
 not to own, that he was a *Blasphemer, a  
 Persecutor, and injurious;* and he assigns  
 1 Tim. i. the Cause of all to be his *Ignorance,* and  
 13. *Unbelief.*

BUT

BUT his Ignorance was not affected, S E R M. XII.  
nor his Infidelity incurable: For having the Eyes of his Understanding afterwards enlightned; and being chosen of God to know his Will, and to see that just one, and to hear the Voice of his Mouth; he became as eminent a Pattern of a judicious, well grounded Zeal, as he was before notorious for the contrary.

AND he was particularly solicitous, to express his own Christian Zeal, by working the Conversion of his Brethren, and Countrymen the *Jews*; and by informing, and directing their still mistaken, and misguided Zeal, even after they had embraced Christianity.

To this Purpose, is that passionatè, and tender Address to them, in the 10<sup>th</sup> to the *Romans*. *Brethren my Hearts Desire, and Prayer is to God, for Israel, in that they might be saved. For I bear them Record, they have a Zeal of God, but not according to Knowledge. For they being ignorant of the Righteousness of God (that is our Justification through Faith in Christ) and going about to establish their own Righteousness, (by a Reliance that is upon their legal Perform-*



SERM. Performances) *have not submitted themselves to the Righteousness of God*; that is, have either rejected the Gospel, as unavailable to Justification, or else receiv'd it, not in its Simplicity, but blended it with some of their antient Prejudices, and the abrogated Rites of the *Jewish Religion*.

AND from this Passage, 'tis evident enough, that some previous Knowledge is absolutely necessary for the Guidance, and Direction of our Zeal. For Zeal is no Guide to itself; a Man must first make a practical Judgment, and satisfy himself concerning the Fitness, and Worthiness of the Object, about which it is conversant, and of its Conducibility to God's Glory; before he can safely set it on Work, or employ it. For the *Light of the Body is the Eye*; it is the practical Judgment, that gives Direction to our Actions: *And if the Light that is in thee be Darkness*, (if it be no other than a blind Zeal destitute of Judgment) *how great is that Darkness?* That is, how great is the Perplexity, Confusion, and Inconsistency, to which we must be necessarily exposed in Acting. For  
a strong

a strong Gust of undistinguishing Zeal may S E R M.  
be as apt, and perhaps apter, to drive one XII.  
to commit the greatest Absurdities, and  
Irregularities, than to disturb one in the  
sober Discharge of his Duty; especially  
considering how much Passion is wont to  
be predominant over Reason, in your ig-  
norant, and injudicious Zealots: But

*Sixthly*, It suffices not that our Zeal  
commence upon good Grounds, unless it  
be carried on, and prosecuted by such Me-  
thods as are lawful, prudent, and pro-  
per.

LAWFUL they must of Necessity be,  
because 'tis a Maxim without Exception in  
Morals, that the End cannot justify the  
Means; and 'tis absurd indeed to think,  
that God's Glory should be effectually pro-  
moted by any unlawful Practice.

AND therefore it was an unwarran-  
table Thing in *Saul*, to slay the *Gibeonites*  
(as we read he did) contrary to the Oath, 2 Sam. xxi. 2.  
by which the Children of *Israel*, had for-  
merly bound themselves up. And though  
he did it as it is there said in *his Zeal*, to Joshua ix.  
*the Children of Israel*, and *Judah*; and in <sup>15</sup>  
Pursuance, as he might pretend, of a divine  
Command,

SER. M. Command, yet was the Land punished  
XII. *with three Years Famine, for his Sake, even  
because he slew the Gibeonites.*

IN like Manner, Instruction to the Ignorant, and Relief to the Indigent, are charitable Acts, that may redound to the Honour of God, and may very worthily employ our Christian Zeal; but yet it were a very preposterous Way of expressing that Zeal, to make a Trade of stealing *Bibles*, to distribute among those, that are not able to buy; or to grind the Faces of the Poor, by cruel Oppression; in order to build an Hospital to maintain them in.

IT is absolutely necessary therefore, that a Zeal in itself commendable, should be pursued, and executed by lawful Means; because otherwise it forfeits its Commendation, and changes its very Nature, and becomes no other indeed, than a Sort of sanctified Wickedness.

BUT it is requisite moreover, that our Zeal should be conducted by Discretion, in the Choice, and Use of such Means, as are not only lawful, but also prudent, and proper.

FOR

FOR that which is lawful, is not always expedient; and he that does not consult the Expediency, as well as Lawfulness of the Means, he makes use of, in the Execution of his Zeal; may hazard to fall short of his End, even when he seems to have it nearest in View, and is in the hottest Pursuit after it.

S E R M.  
XII.

FOR Example, suppose for once, that the pious Frauds, the lying Wonders, and the counterfeit Reliques of the Church of *Rome* were lawful, in order to facilitate the Conversion of *Heathens*, or to confirm the Faith of weaker *Christians*; I say, supposing, but not granting they were lawful, yet it can never be prudent, or adviseable, to apply them to such a Purpose. For even where they are swallowed without Chewing, and pass undiscover'd; they do manifestly weaken, and expose the common Faith, by building it upon a false Foundation, that when it comes to the Test, can't abide the Shock of Argument. But if the Cheat happens once to be found out, that shakes even the true Foundation; it furnishes fresh Matter of Cavil to the *Sceptic*, and the *Atheist*; and renders the  
Miracles



S E R M. Miracles of *Christ* himself, the main Evidence of Religion, suspected also of Imposture.

XII.

So inexpedient is it to lye for the Truth, so little is it for the Advantage of Religion, to pretend to the Power of Miracles, without being able to make it good.

AND the Truth on't is, if our Zeal be not constantly under the Conduct of Prudence, it will be too apt to miscarry at every Turn, and sometimes to prove of real Disservice to Religion. Even the common Circumstances of Time, and Place, if not heedfully watched, and discreetly chosen, may chance to be very disadvantageous to a good Cause, when 'tis most zealously espoused, and prosecuted. For Instance, it is most certainly the Part of a zealous good *Christian* to reprove, and if he can, to restrain, and repress the Insolence of the common Swearer, the Scoffer, or Blasphemer; but yet should a Man thrust himself into such Company, in the midst of their irreligious Mirth, or in the Heat of their drunken Fury; what would the Event be, but the exposing of himself, and the Cause he is concerned for, to the Scorn, and

and Outrage of unreasonable, and extravagant Men? It is highly reasonable therefore in the Exercise of our Zeal, that we should always have a nice Regard to the proper Season, *δεδούλεις τῷ καιρῷ*, as some Copies render the Words of the Text, instead of *τῷ κυρίῳ*, serving ourselves of the fittest Opportunity that is, which is indeed of considerable Moment; because Zeal that is unseasonably employ'd, is for the main Part unserviceable, and too often prejudicial to Religion. But

*Seventhly*, The last Requisite in godly Zeal, is, that it be always expressed in a decent, and fitting Manner. And this will require our utmost Vigilance; because in a Complication of so many various Passions, as are naturally aiding, and assisting to our Zeal, we shall be in perpetual Danger of transgressing the Rules of Prudence, and Decency, nay, and of Justice, and Charity too; unless they be constantly kept under good Regulation.

In particular, the native Fervour of Zeal, when heated with Indignation against those Practices, which we think we have just Reason to abhor; will be too apt  
to

SERM. to carry us into indecent Excesses, unless  
 XII. we keep a very strict Guard upon our  
 selves.

In the mean Time, most certain it is, that true Zeal which proceeds from the ardent Love of God, can never consist with Hatred, and Cruelty against our Brethren. Warm indeed it is, but not waspish; vehement but not violent; resolute but not revengeful. The Truth and Excellency of the Gospel of *Christ*, the Honour of God, and the Salvation of Men, are dear and sacred Pledges; which Zeal is always most affectionately concerned for, and will always most earnestly contend for. But then, 'tis still a compassionate Concern, and a very charitable Contention; not carried on by Virulency of Speech, or railing Accusation; for 'tis the way of Zeal not to scold, or *hector* People out of their Errors, but to convince them in the Meekness of Wisdom; not pronouncing the peremptory Sentence of Damnation upon all besides our selves. That's the Presumption indeed of the *Romish* Church; but true Zeal tho' it be an earnest Advocate for God, dares not pretend, or set up for a Judge in his Stead;

*Godly Zeal consider'd.*

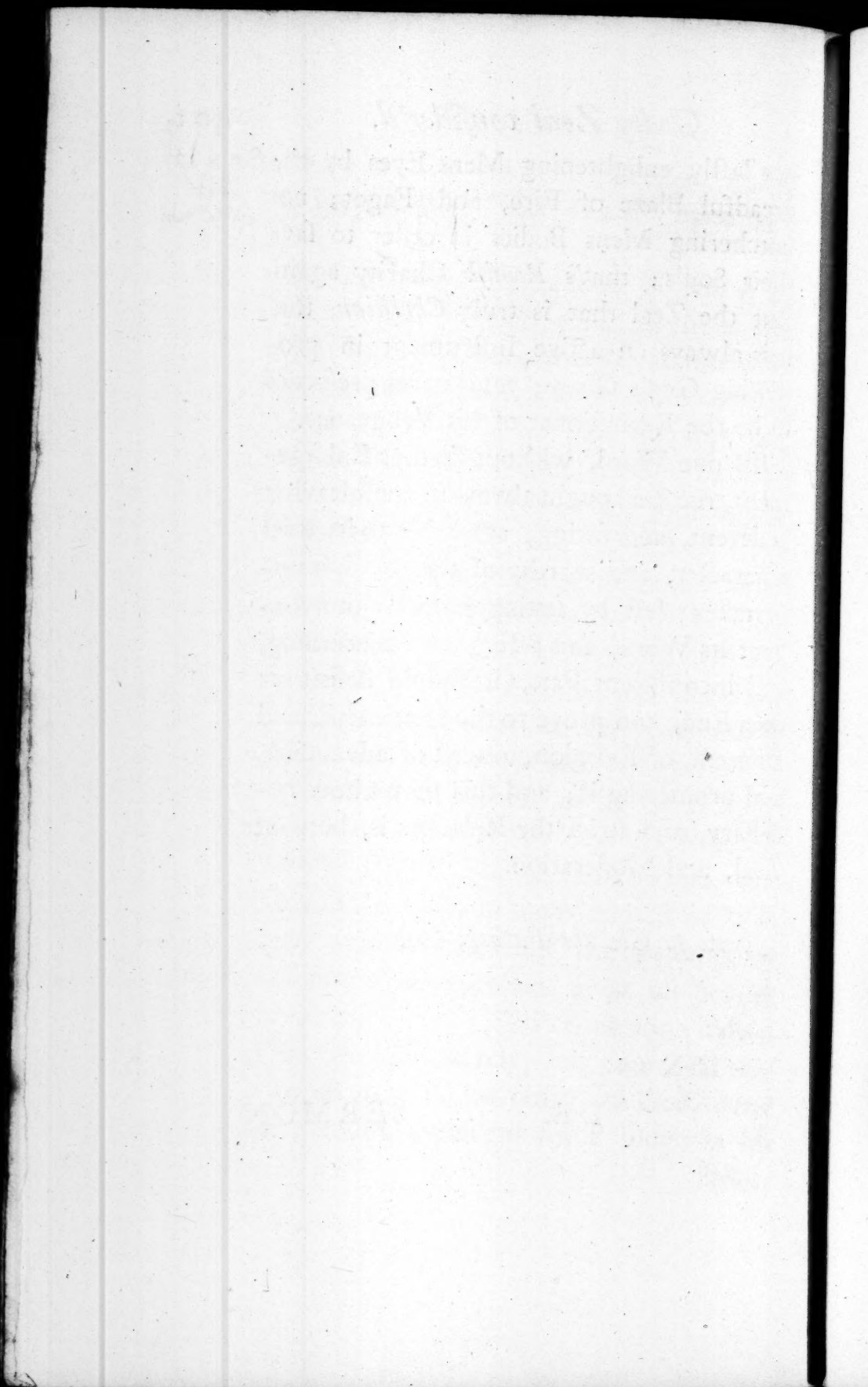
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not lastly enlightening Mens Eyes by the dreadful Blaze of Fire, and Fagot; nor butchering Mens Bodies in order to save their Souls; that's *Romish* Charity again. But the Zeal that is truly *Christian*, tho' it is always an active Instrument in promoting God's Glory; yet it never presumes to be the Executioner of his Vengeance.

IN one Word, without farther Enlargement, true Zeal ought always to consult what is decent, and fitting; agreeable to its own Character, and worthy of the Cause it undertakes; lest by setting preposterously about its Work, and acting an unbecoming, and inconsistent Part, it should defeat its own End, and prove to the Detriment, and Discredit of Religion, instead of advancing, and promoting it; and this shews how necessary, and strict the Relation is, betwixt Zeal, and Moderation.

*Now to God the Father, &c.*

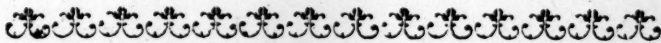






## S E R M O N XIII.

The Nature of Godly Zeal con-  
sider'd.

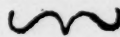


ROM. xii. latter Part of the II<sup>th</sup>  
Verse.

*Fervent in Spirit, serving the  
Lord.*



N Speaking to these Words; S E R M.  
I propos'd, XIII.



I. *First*, To represent to  
you the genuine Nature;  
the essential Properties, the requisite Qua-  
VOL. II. D d 2 lifica-

S E R M. lifications of godly Zeal, or according to  
 XIII. the *Apostle's* Style, this *Fervour of Spirit*,  
 ~~~~~ in *serving the Lord*.

II. *Secondly*, To recommend it to your Practice, by proper Motives, and Arguments.

III. *Thirdly*, HUMBLY to offer some special Directions about the laudable, and conscionable Exercise of it.

IN executing the first Part of my Design, (which was to acquaint you with the Nature, Properties, and Qualifications of godly Zeal) I set it before you under this Description, *viz.* that it is a hearty, and affectionate Concern for the Service, and Honour of God; together with an earnest Desire, and Study to promote it, upon good Grounds, by lawful, prudent, and proper Methods, and in such Manner, and Measure as is decent, and convenient.

THIS Description, I thought, might help us tolerably well, to conceive what it is, that constitutes the Essence of Zeal, and how it stands differenced, both from the direct Opposites to it, and the indirect Abuses of it; as also, how all, or most of the Cases appertaining to this Subject, might

might fairly be resolved. And therefore, S E R M.
XIII.
I made it my Business, in my last Discourse to explain, and confirm every Part of it, both by Reason, Scripture, and Example.

AND the Sum amounts to this; that Zeal is a hearty, and affectionate Concern for God's Honour, and Service; hearty, in Opposition to hypocritical Pretence, and affectionate, in Opposition to Unconcernedness, Indifference, or Lukewarmness. That 'tis a mixed Affection, consisting of several simple Passions, each of them occasionally exerted, according as the Object is differently view'd, or apprehended; that in Particular it is primarily founded upon a most ardent Love of God, and thence inspired with a vehement Desire to glorify his most holy Name, and attended with a singular Delight to see it affectionately done, or in any good Measure promoted by ourselves, or others; and on the other Hand, fired with a just Indignation against the bold Encroachment of Vice, and the Dishonour it reflects upon God; and moved with Grief, and Pity for the Destruction it brings upon Mens Souls; and wrought

S E R M. up to a perfect Detestation of all such im-
 XIII. pious, and ruinous Courses.

AND 'tis requisite, this Zeal should commence upon good Grounds, that is, upon sober, and judicious Principles, to prevent its being misplaced upon an undue Object. It is requisite it should be carried on, by lawful, prudent, and proper Methods; by lawful Methods, because it would be preposterous to think of advancing the Glory of God, by any unlawful Practice: By prudent, and proper Methods; because what is of itself lawful, may perhaps not be expedient; and what in some Circumstances would be highly expedient, may not be equally so in all. And therefore Discretion ought always to be the Companion, and Guide of Zeal. And lastly, 'tis requisite that Zeal should always be governed with Temper, and expressed, and executed in such Manner as is decent, and convenient. For where there is constant Occasion for the Exercise of so many various Passions, and that with some Degree of Vehemence; unless those Passions be under very good Care, and Management, they may be too apt to transport us beyond

yond the Bounds of Reason, Justice, or ^{S E R M.}
Charity, and thereby betray us into great ^{XIII.}
Indecencies, and Irregularities, and cause
even a well-meant Zeal, unhappily to mis-
carry; for want of the Temperament of a
little Calmness, and Moderation.

AND thus having refreshed your Memo-
ries with a brief Recollection of what I
insisted more largely upon before, that
so you may have the Image, and Re-
presentation of godly Zeal still before
your Eyes: I now proceed,

II. *Secondly*, As I propos'd in the se-
cond Place, to recommend it to your Pra-
ctice, by proper Motives, and Argu-
ments.

AND, I think, I may deservedly recom-
mend it, as one of the justest, the most
reasonable, and the most necessary, the
most becoming, and the most beneficial
good Qualities, that can adorn a *Christian's*
Practice. And

First, IT is most just, whether we con-
sider God's prerogative Right, to the best
of our Affections, and Services; or the e-

S E R M quitable Reasons on our Part, that bind us
XIII. thereunto.

~ FOR most unquestionably, God has a prerogative Right to the best of our Affections, and Services; and that immediately derived from the very Preeminence of his Nature; not barely as he is the supreme Being, and the Author, Proprietor, and Disposer of all Things, but as he is the supreme Good, and therefore the ultimate End, and Scope of rational Creatures, and their Actions; and the absolute Complement of all the Happiness they are capable of.

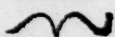
FOR if we can but raise our Thoughts high enough, to behold, (though at the humblest Distance) his infinite Wisdom, and Goodness, and Mercy, and the rest of his Excellencies, and Perfections; he must needs appear to be the most amiable, the most desirable, the most delightful, and every Way the most eminently worthy Object of our Contemplation, and Devotion; and the most passionate Addresses, and respectful Expressions of an enflamed Zeal.

FOR

FOR *whom* have we in Heaven, but him? SERM.

And who is there on Earth, that we can de-

XIII.



fire besides him? He is the only perfect, all-sufficient, inexhaustible, unchangeable, eternal Good. This is his peculiar Glory, which he will not, he cannot give to another; neither should we misbestow the Ardor of our Affections upon any but him, who best deserves them, nor should we suffer them to wax cool, and languish in his Service; but we ought cheerfully to offer them up, upon the humble Altar of a fervent Heart, as a whole Burnt-offering, to his Praise, and Honour. It is but what he is entitled to by the strictest natural Right; of which, it would be highly unjust in us to deprive him; especially if it be remembred, that there are equitable Reasons on our Part, that strongly bind us to the contrary; in Regard, both of our manifold Receits *from him*, and the plentiful Communications, and the most surprizing, and endearing Instances of his Goodness to us.

OUR manifold Receits from him, did I say? Nay verily, it is even all that we are, and all that we have; all our Powers, Faculties, and Affections; all our Advantages,

SER M.
XIII.

ges, and Improvements; particularly that remarkable Privilege of the humane Kind, above Brute Creatures; the Notion of a God I mean, the Impression of religious Principles, and the Capacity, and Propensity to adore, and enjoy our Maker. These are all the Gifts of God, or rather Talents committed to our Trust by him; and therefore the Use, and Interest must of Right belong to himself. And it is a Rule, even approved among ourselves, that to whom Men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. And therefore since God has planted the Sense of Religion in our Nature, and given us suitable Affections to animate, and actuate our religious Zeal; it is but Justice, that our best Reason, and our most vigorous Passions, and our active Endeavours should be zealously employ'd in his Service; and as all the Rivers run into the Sea, and return to the Place, from whence they came; so should our Gifts, and Endowments, which issue first from the Fountain of God's exuberant Grace; flow entirely into the Ocean of his Glory. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all Things.

Godly Zeal consider'd.

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AND besides, there is this particular SERM.
Consideration to enforce the Obligation XIII.
upon us; that God has given us (if I may
have leave so to speak) the generous Pro-
vocation to be zealous for him, by his ex-
pressing, and manifesting so tender, and
affectionate Concern for us, and our Wel-
fare.

The particular Affection, and yearning
Bowels of a Mother towards her Infant,
that hangs at her Breast, are but a faint
Image of God's never failing Love, and
Compassion to us. *Can a Woman forget* Ch. xlix.
her sucking Child saith Isaiah, that she 15.
should not have Compassion on the Son of her
Womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I
not forget thee. And how pathetically
kind, and encouraging, is that Invitation
to Repentance, in the 33^d of Ezekiel, and
the 11th Verse: *As I live saith the Lord*
God, I have no Pleasure in the Death of
the Wicked; but that the Wicked turn from
his Way, and live: Turn ye, turn ye from
your evil Ways, for why will ye die, O House
of Israel?

BUT no Words, no Conceptions can e-
ver reach the amazing Height of that un-
parallel'd

SER M. parallel'd Love which induced the God of
 XIII. all Mercies, to send *his only begotten Son*
 ~~~~~ *into the World, that the World through him*  
*might be saved.* Never was Love like un-  
 Luke i. to this Love, wherewith *God visited, and*  
 68. *redeemed his People.; and raised up a Horn*  
*of Salvation for us.* And, beloved, if God  
 so loved us, and gave us so wonderful  
 Proof of his Love; ought not we in all  
 Equity to make all possible Returns of  
 Love to him? Surely we shall be very un-  
 just, and ungrateful to our compassionate  
 Redeemer, if we think any Zeal too much,  
 any Industry too great, any Labour too  
 painful, any Attempt too hazardous in the  
 Promotion of his Honour, who hath taken  
 such abundant Care to secure our Happi-  
 ness. But to confine myself within some  
 Compass.

*Secondly,* OUR Zeal for God's Honour,  
 and Service, is in itself as reasonable, as  
 with Respect to God 'tis just. For one  
 main Use of Reason (as I take it) is to di-  
 rect, and govern our Passions in such  
 Manner, as to make them subservient to  
 Virtue. And this Direction, and Govern-  
 ment of the Passions, consists, partly in de-  
 termining

termining them towards their proper Objects, and partly in keeping them under due Regulation; that so they may incite us to pursue some rational, and worthy End, and not turn us out of the Way to it, by any precipitate, or disorderly Motion. And certainly Zeal, which is an affectionate Concern for God's Honour, and Service, is an Affection placed upon the most deserving Object; *i. e.* the supreme Good; whose attractive Excellency in Measure of Affection none can equal.

SERM.  
XIII.

AND therefore the Evangelical Precept is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind*; it being impossible indeed, to be immoderate in the Love of him, who is infinitely lovely.

BUT yet lest the Irregularity, or Excess of any other Passion, that is any Ingredient in godly Zeal, should mislead us, and carry us off from the End proposed; it is a Property of such Zeal to commence upon good Grounds, to proceed by lawful, prudent, and proper Methods, and never to shew itself, but in decent, and fitting Manner



SERM. Manner; so that 'tis never supposed to be  
 XIII. let loose from the Restraints of Justice,  
 and Prudence, and Charity.

AND therefore Zeal indeed is but Passion sanctified to religious Purposes, under the Guidance of Reason, influenced by religious Principles, and steadily pursuing the Glory of God, as its great and ultimate End. And as such, I may fairly commend it to any reasonable Man; since 'tis the highest Act of Reason, and not the Effect of enthusiastical Heat, nor the Effort of mere Passion. But

*Thirdly*, ZEAL is not only reasonable, but necessary; and necessary it is, both to the *Being*, and the *Well-being* of Religion. For

*First*, THE very Essence of Religion consists in due Apprehensions of God's Excellencies, and Perfections; and suitable Affections, and Demeanour towards him. If Men have any just, or honourable Conceptions of God; this will naturally excite their zealous Affections, and produce an Esteem, and Love for him, an earnest Desire, and Study to please him, a Complacency, and Delight in so doing; a solicitous

tous Care to prevail with others to do the like, and Grief, and Commiseration (mixt with a pious Indignation) to see People do otherwise. But as for those that feel no Passions of this Sort, who are either wholly unaffected, and unconcerned, or at best but very supine, and indifferent about Matters of this Nature, they ('tis to be fear'd) are either ignorant of, or averse to the true Principles of Religion; or they have in a great Measure lost the Sense of it. They may perhaps *retain the Form of Godliness*, or the empty Profession of it, but they are *Strangers to the Power, and Virtue of it*: Their Religion is a bare Skeleton, heartless, and lifeless, and of no Account in the Sight of God. So essential is Zeal, to the very Being of Religion. And

*Secondly*, 'Tis of no less Moment to its Well-being, that is to its Preservation, and Furtherance in the World. For the great Enemy to God, and Religion, and the Souls of Men, is very studious, and industrious to promote the Kingdom of Darkness; his Instruments are very numerous, and always active, and indefatigable in his Service: His Stratagems are various, violent

SER M. lent and subtle; sometimes assaulting the  
 XIII. Church of God with furious Persecution,  
 and sometimes endangering it with too much Ease, and Security; sometimes dividing the Unity, and perverting the Faith of *Christians*, by Schisms, and Heresies, and sometimes corrupting their Morals with filthy, and contagious Vices; sometimes striking at the very Foundations of Religion, by downright Infidelity, and sometimes betraying its Strength by easy Credulity: Sometimes exposing the Word of God, by a Mixture of fond Superstition, and sometimes affronting it by impudent Profaneness.

AND amidst all this fierce Opposition, and the many Perils with which Religion has in all Ages been environed, there was Need of Zeal, and Courage to defend it. And had not the first Defenders of *Christianity*, the glorious Company of the *Apostles*, and the noble Army of Martyrs, been supported with a very extraordinary Degree of this Zeal; their Religion must in all humane Probability have been hunted, and hissed out of the World. Nor has it such fair Quarter at this very Day, but  
 that

that it will require a good Stock of Fer-<sup>S E R M.</sup>  
vour, and Fortitude in those, that are re-<sup>XIII.</sup>  
solved to maintain their own Integrity,  
and appear in Vindication of a Cause, so  
much maligned on the one Hand, and so  
much neglected on the other.

For if we take a Survey of Religion,  
as the State of it is now among ourselves;  
how is her Beauty obscured, and defaced  
with an infinite Diversity of Sects, and O-  
pinions, and needless Divisions, and con-  
tentious Disputations? How is her Health  
endangered, by the most pestilent Heresies,  
and her Strength impair'd by unhappy  
Schisms, 'till it is at length become the  
Scorn of the Contumacious, and the Tri-  
umph of the Libertine, and the Atheist?

AND in the mean Time, how do *Scep-  
ticism*, and *Deism*, and Infidelity lift up  
their Heads, and vaunt themselves? And  
how do all Manner of Irreligion, and Im-  
morality abound, and increase among us?

AND this shews the Necessity of a cou-  
ragious, and vigorous Zeal, both to pre-  
vent the Growth of Impiety, and to sup-  
press it, when it has gathered Strength.  
For all that unwearied Diligence, that



S E R M. Contrivance, and Confederacy, with which  
 XIII. the Devil, and his Agents endeavour to  
 propagate Vice, and render it predominant, will not easily be baffled, by sitting still, and sighing, and wishing well to the Cause of God, and hoping for better Times. No! 'Tis certainly a necessary Duty, more especially incumbent upon those, who are entrusted with any Share in the Government, (not with the careless *Gallio* to overlook all these Things; not with the indulgent *Eli*, to say softly, *Why do ye do these Things? It is no good Report I hear*: But) to rebuke Offenders sharply, to shame the less ingenuous, to chastise the more presumptuous, and to omit nothing that may lawfully, and prudently be done towards the effectual Restraint of fashionable, and prevailing Wickedness. But besides the Necessity of it,

*Fourthly*, THERE is nothing more becoming, and commendable in a *Christian*, than a Zeal for his God; or rather nothing more unbecoming, and indeed inexcusable, than the contrary. For how zealous, I beseech you, are the Children of this World in their Generation? With what Appli-

Application, and Vigour, and Ardor do they pursue their little temporal Ends, and Interests? If Honour be their Idol, how obsequiously do they worship it, how eagerly do they desire it, how jealous are they of it? How dissatisfied without it? How full of Envy, and Indignation against those, that stand in their Way to it? If *Mammon* be their God, how do they compass Sea, and Land to serve him? And with what Pains do they get, with what Care do they keep, with what Study do they increase the Treasure, that they set their Hearts upon? If Love be the reigning Passion, how do they seek to ingratiate, and endear themselves, and to testify their Esteem, and Respect for, and their Delight in the Persons beloved, by courting their Presence, by observing their Pleasure, by espousing their Interest, and Reputation, and by resenting, and revenging all the Wrongs, and Indignities, which they happen to suffer? And shall the Things that are in the World, *the Lusts of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*, be thus zealously adored? Shall God be thus outrivalled by his Crea-

SERM.  
XIII.  
~

S E R M.

XIII.

tures according to the Opinion, and Practice of the Wicked? And shall the Religious, God's own Servants, and Worshipers, appear cool in his Service, even to Indifference? As if there were no Charms, or Attractives in infinite Perfections, no Transports in divine Love, as if there were nothing warming, or affecting in Religion? Nay, as if it were cold as Ice at the Heart, to quench all their Heat, and damp their Spirits, and deaden their Endeavours. For Shame therefore, those that pretend to Religion, and to set their Affections on Things above, and not on Things on the Earth; ought not to be guilty of so great an *Indecorum*; when they have Objects of such transcendent Excellency, to excite, and to inflame their Zeal, they ought not to suffer themselves to be so visibly outdone by the Children of this World, in their worldly Pursuits. Add we

*Fifthly*, OVER and above the Decency of the Thing, that Zeal is highly beneficial, and that both to the Person endued with it, and to others. To the Person endued with it, it is,

First, BECAUSE it manifestly tends to <sup>S E R M.</sup> the Improvement of his Graces, and to <sup>XIII.</sup> his better Proficiency in Godliness. For the more conversant a Man is in religious Duties, the more constant, and intent he is at his Devotions, the more desirous he is of pleasing God himself, and the more impatient of seeing him dishonoured by others; by so much the more lively Idea will he acquire of the divine Perfections; by so much the higher will his Esteem rise, by so much the more exalted will his Affections be; and lastly, by so much the more sweet, and relishing, the Complacency that he takes in the Service of his God, and the Discharge of a good Conscience.

AND for his farther Encouragement, he is entitled to God's especial Favour, and a more abundant Recompence of Reward at his Hands. For we have his own express Word for it, *Them that honour me, I will* <sup>1 Sam. ii. 30.</sup> *honour*; which Honour 'tis observable, old *Eli*, (who was a good Man, but an indifferent Magistrate) very justly forfeited for humouring his Sons above God, as we read, *Ÿ 29.* and for suffering their abominable



SERMON. minable Prophanations to go unpunished.

XIII. *I will judge his House for ever, for the Iniquity which he knoweth saith the Lord; because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* Whereas on the contrary,

when Phinebas zealous for God's Sake stood up, and executed Judgment upon the adulterous Couple in the very Act; *That* (the Psalmist tells us) *was counted to him, for Righteousness unto all Generations, for evermore.*

Pf. lvi. 31.

BUT moreover, the good Man's Zeal redounds to the Benefit of others, as well as himself; for there is a native Simplicity in an honest, undissembled Zeal; that will attract People's Eyes, and strike them with a secret Veneration for Religion; and the Force of a good Example, backed with a becoming Earnestness of Affection, will command both the Observation, and Approbation of the Beholders, and provoke them (as it may happily prove) to a pious Emulation. And is not he a mighty Benefactor, who by the Light, and Direction, by the Persuasion, or rather Authority of his Example, is likely to be Instrumental in *converting Sinners from the Error*

*Godly Zeal consider'd.*

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*Error of their Ways; in saving their Souls* SERM.  
*from Death, and hiding a Multitude of* XIII.

*Sins.* Although this also will prove to his own unspeakable Advantage in the End; and add Lustre to that Glory, with which he shall finally be rewarded in Heaven. *For they that be wise* (or Teachers of others, as the Prophecy of *Daniel* assures Ch. xii. 3. us) *shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever.* And now in the Upshot of all; if any Justice, or Equity can oblige; if any Reason can prescribe, if any Necessity can enforce, if any Decency can invite, or any Advantage can allure; all these do conspire, to recommend godly Zeal, as one of the most lovely Graces, and of the greatest Use, and Ornament in our *Christian Practice.*

*Now to God the Father, &c.*

For the purpose of the  
the following is a list of the  
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## S E R M O N XIV.

The Nature of Godly Zeal consider'd.



ROM. xii. latter Part of the 11<sup>th</sup> Verse.

*Fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord.*



IN discoursing upon these S E R M. XIV.  
Words, I propos'd,

I. *First*, To represent to you the genuine Nature, the essential Properties, the requisite Qualifications of godly Zeal, or according to the



SERM. the Apostle's Style, this *Fervour of Spirit* in  
 XIV. *serving the Lord.*

II. *Secondly*, To recommend it to your Practice, by proper Motives, and Arguments; which two Particulars I have fully consider'd. I come now

III. *Thirdly and Lastly*, To offer some few brief Directions about the laudable, and conscionable Exercise of our Zeal, and I have done. And

*First*, LET us endeavour to raise our Meditations, and exercise them much, and often upon God, and his most amiable Perfections.: Let us contemplate him, as the Sovereign Good, his Goodness as the Fountain of our Happiness, and his Glory, as our last and chiefest End. In a Word, let us set the Lord always before us, and we shall soon feel the warm, and quickening Influence of his heavenly Presence, We shall find a Fire kindling within us, and burning with a bright, but gentle Flame, pointed directly up towards Heaven; we shall find ourselves inspired with a defacated Zeal, that will teach us to purify ourselves, as God is pure, and to de-  
 dicate

dicate not only ourselves, and our religious SERVICES to him, but even to sanctify the common Actions of Life; so *that whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, we may do all to the Glory of God.* But

S E R M.  
XIV.

*Secondly*, Having this excellent End in View, let us aim directly at it, and let us take Care, that our Zeal be unbiaſſed, and diſintereſted in the Proſecution of it; and there is Need of this Caution; for as a judicious Author obſerves, \* the Zeal of God's Glory is many Times unconſcionably pretended, where either it is not at all, but in Shew, or at leaſt wiſe mingled with ſuch a ſtrong Infuſion of corrupt Partiality, and Self-ſeeking, as ſowereth it extremely, and rendreth it very inexcusable. A remarkable Inſtance of which we have in the *Phariſees*, who juggled with the poor Man who had been born blind; ſeeking to work upon him by fair Words, and Pretences, *give God the Praise, &c.* when John ix. at the ſame Time, they wickedly endeavoured to obſcure the Glory of that mira-

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\* *Sanderſon's Sermons*, p. 544.

SERM. *culous Cure, which Jesus had wrought*  
 XIV. upon him. And indeed, all History abounds with Instances, (I wish I could except our own) wherein Piety has been the Pretence, but Lucre, or vain Glory the Design; wherein Conscience has appeared like the Intercessor, but Contumacy has been the Abettor; wherein Liberty has been the Plea, but Government the Aim. In short, wherein the Vindication of God's Honour, and the Reformation of Religion have been made the Stale to Faction, Revenge, Rapine, and Sacrilege, or the like. But if Men are truly zealous for God, they must have a Care of adulterating their Zeal, with the base Mixture of any wicked Lust, or corrupt End of their own; for at that Rate, their pretended Sanctity is both the greatest Presumption, and the boldest Prophanation.

*Thirdly,* To keep our Zeal from wandering, or misplacing itself upon improper Objects, it will be requisite, as much as in us lies, to furnish ourselves with a competent Measure of *Christian Knowledge*. 'Tis true Ignorance, that is invincibly, and incurably such, is some Kind of Excuse  
 for

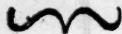
for an erroneous Conscience, and a mistaken Zeal: And it must be confessed, it were in vain gravely to advise those, to be knowing, and discreet, who perhaps are hardly capable of it. But yet we may advise People to inform themselves of their Duty, as well as they can. And the main Precepts both of Morality, and *Christianity*, do in Effect lie level to every Capacity; and if a Man will bring but a teachable Mind along with him, and an honest Heart, he may learn enough of his Duty from the brief Explication of it in the *Church Catechism*, both to guide his Practice, and his Zeal too; provided he is contented to confine his Zeal within the Compass of his Knowledge, and not think himself wiser than his Teachers.

BUT if he will needs be over righteous, and over wise, and over zealous, about Matters, that are above his slender Scantling; so far he becomes answerable for all the Mistakes, that such a blind Zeal (and the blinder, commonly the fiercer) will be apt to lead him into. And such a Man must in Course be exposed to a good Plenty of Mistakes: For Ignorance is as unfit to be  
the

S E R M.  
XIV.



SERM. the Nurse; and Handmaid of Zeal, as it  
 XIV. is to be the Parent of Devotion.



A *Fourth* Rule, that is always carefully to be observ'd in the Exercise of our Zeal, is to proportion it to the Nature, Dignity, and Importance of the Things, about which it is conversant.

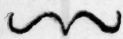
FOR as God, and his Glory, is therefore the most immediate Object of our Zeal, and deserves without Comparison, the highest, and most exalted Degree of our Affection, as being indeed our supreme Good, and our ultimate End: So all Things else whatsoever, in which the Glory of God is concerned, will deserve proportionably of our Affection, and Esteem, as they are in themselves more, or less valuable; or in their Consequence more or less conducive to that best, and most excellent End. And by this Standard, we must constantly measure our Zeal, otherwise, if it be not totally void of Judgment, and ill founded at the Bottom, it will at least be very faulty, and irregular in the Process.

FOR Example; if our Zeal be just, and well proportion'd, it will be sure to concern

cern itself most, about Matters of the SERM.  
greatest Moment; it will place the Sum, XIV.  
and Strefs of all Religion on a sound Faith,  
and sincere Obedience, and in worshipping  
God with humble Reverence, and a pure  
Heart, and heavenly Affections, according  
to his own most holy Institution; and lastly,  
in the conscientious Practice of all those a-  
miable Virtues, and Graces, which do so  
naturally flow (as it were) from the un-  
feigned Love of God, and our Neighbour;  
such as are Righteousness, Humility, Pu-  
rity, Peaceableness, Meekness, Brotherly  
Kindness, and the like.

ON the contrary, if our Zeal be not ad-  
justed in due Proportion, as it should be,  
if it does not corrupt the very Essence of  
Religion, it will go near to spoil its Beau-  
ty, and Symmetry, and mangle its Inte-  
grity, and render it a Thing very incon-  
stant, and unlike to itself. Sometimes the  
Substance of all Religion shall be made  
to consist of the bare Efficacy of Faith,  
exclusive of the Necessity of good Works;  
sometimes an honest, moral Life shall be  
esteemed the one Thing needful, and es-  
sential, without the unreasonable Imposi-  
tion

SERM. fition of requiring us to believe Things  
 XIV. above our Reason.



SOMETIMES Circumstance shall pass for the most substantial Part of Religion: And the venerable Matron shall be trick'd out in a gaudy Dress of numerous, and pompous Ceremonies, contrary to her native Purity, and Simplicity: And this outward adorning, her fond Adorers will be prone to admire, instead of her real, and intrinsic Excellency.

SOMETIMES again, she shall be stripped naked of all Ornament, though never so proper, and becoming; and an affected Slovenliness shall juggle out even common Decency, or at least a great Part of that external Reverence, which should always accompany the Worship of God. Instead whereof, Mens Minds shall be filled with needless Scruples, and superstitious Fears of complying with any indifferent Rite, though in its own Nature never so innocent, and in its Use never so solemn, and significant: And this in Despight of all good Order, in Opposition to their spiritual Pastors, and Governors, and with the manifest Hazard, both of the Churches Peace, and

and Safety, as well as the sensible Decay S E R M.  
of true *Christian* Piety, and Charity. XIV.

THESE, and such as these, will be the mischievous Effects of such a disproportionate Zeal. It will sometimes resolve all Zeal into a *Solfidian* Confidence; and sometimes it will sink it down to the Level of natural Reason, and common Morality. Sometimes it will empty it all into Superstition, or mere Formality, and sometimes it will fill it full of Scrupulosity, and Preciseness, and drive it from one Superstition to another; but to be sure, where there is no due Proportion observed, there can be no Regularity, Steadiness, or Consistency.

It is most highly requisite therefore, that we should take the Measure of our Zeal from the Nature, and Moment of Things. So shall we be convinced, that the Sum, and Substance of Religion, does jointly consist in Faith, and Obedience; that the Belief, and Practice of a *Christian*, are most strictly connected together, and necessarily dependent upon each other: That the very Spirit, and Life of Devotion, springs from the inward Sense, and Affection of the Heart, and that this will



SERM. naturally exprefs itself in fuch Rites, and  
XIV. Ufages, and Geftures, as appear to be the  
propereft *Signs* of a profound Regard, and  
Veneration; that 'tis a fuperftitious Piece  
of Fondnefs to miftake the Signs, for the  
Things fignified; and that 'tis as fond, and  
fuperftitious to fcruple the Ufe of fuch cu-  
ftomary Signs, (though in themfelves in-  
different) for fear of Superftition. In one  
Word, if we weigh Things in a well fix-  
ed Ballance, we fhall be thoroughly con-  
vinced, that the Glory of God ought to be  
the ultimate Scope of all our Actions;  
That the fpiritual Part of his divine Wor-  
fhip, and the weightier Matters of the  
Law, Piety, Probity, and Mercy, are more  
immediately conducive thereunto: That  
the Circumftantials, and Appendages of  
Religion are to be valued according to  
their Ufefulness, and Subferviency to the  
main End; and laftly, whatever Difference  
there may be in other Things, that the U-  
nity, and Peace of God's Church, and the  
mutual Edification of the Body in Love,  
are Matters of the greateft Weight, and  
ought to be esteem'd, and profecuted as  
fuch, by every good *Chriftian*, even at the  
Expence

Expenſe of any ſlender Opinion of his S E R M.  
own, or any weak Scruple, that he may XIV.  
chance to entertain about Things, that are  
leſs concerning.

*Fifthly*, For the better ordering of our Zeal, it will be neceſſary, that we take care to employ it, every one within the Sphere of his proper Station, and Vocation. *For God is not the Author of Confu-* 1 Cor. xiv.  
*ſion, but of Peace; as in all the Churches of* 33.  
*the Saints*, ſaith our Apoſtle. And it is not the Part of godly Zeal to break in upon that ſacred Order, which God himſelf thought fit to eſtabliſh; and for the Preſervation of which, he diſpenſed at firſt ſuch Diverſities of Gifts, Adminiſtrations, and Operations, but all ſubordinate one to another; that ſo he might be glorified in all Things, and always in the moſt orderly Manner. From whence the neceſſary Inference is, (as St. Paul himſelf deduces it in this very Chapter.) That *having Gifts* Ver. 6, 7.  
*differing according to the Grace that is* 8.  
*given to us, whether Prophecy, let us prophecy, according to the Proportion of Faith; or Miniſtry, let us wait on our Miniſtring: Or he that teacheth, on teaching: Or he*

SERM. *that exhorteth, on Exhortation: He that*  
 XIV. *giveth, let him do it with Simplicity: He*  
*that ruleth, with Diligence: He that shew-*  
*eth Mercy, with Cheerfulness. The plain*  
 Meaning of which is, that 'tis the Duty  
 of a *Christian* to acquit himself faithfully,  
 and zealously in the Service of God; every  
 Man according to his Function, and his  
 Talent, without interfering with another  
 Man's Office, or pretending to more than  
 belongs to him.

EVERY one is not empower'd to rule,  
 or enabled to prophesy, that perhaps may  
 be qualified to teach, and to exhort, or if  
 not for that, at least to minister, and shew  
 Mercy. His Duty in the mean Time is  
 to attend upon the Business that he is qua-  
 lified for, or called to; and not to extend  
 his Zeal beyond its due Bounds, either by  
 envying those, that move in a larger, or  
 higher Sphere than himself; or by arro-  
 gating to himself equal Power, or Abilities  
 with them, without sufficient Ground, or  
 Warrant.

EVERY private *Christian* is not called to  
 be a Minister, or a Magistrate: Nor is e-  
 very Minister a Bishop, nor every Ma-  
 gistrate

gistrate the supreme. Let every Man <sup>SERM.</sup> therefore, wherein he is called, there- <sup>XIV.</sup> in abide with God. It is fit the private *Christian* should content himself, without invading the Ministry, or the Magistracy; let it suffice that he shew the Sincerity of his Zeal, by quietly submitting to his Teachers, and Governors, and by ordering his own Conversation aright, and by helping forward the Edification of others, by his friendly Advice, and fraternal Correction, or at least by his charitable Intercession for them.

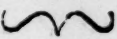
It belongs to the inferior Clergy, to feed their several Flocks with sound Instruction, and ghostly Counsel, and seasonable Reproof; and to be *Examples to the* <sup>1 Tim. iv.</sup> *Believers in Word, in Conversation, in Spirit, in Charity, in Faith, in Purity,* and in all due Submission to their Superiors: It is incumbent upon our Ecclesiastical Governors, at once to strengthen, and to temper their Authority, by their Wisdom, and Gravity, and Impartiality, and Condescension to their Brethren; and a vigilant Care, and Concern for God's Church, *over which the holy Ghost has made them*



SER M. *Overseers.* And by the good Government,  
 XIV. both of themselves, and those committed  
 to their Charge, to render Religion venerable, and lovely in the Eyes of all, and to recommend it to the more especial Favour, and Protection of the civil Powers.

AND here it is the Office of the subordinate Magistrates, seasonably to step in, and to lend their Aid, and Countenance towards the Support of true Religion, and Virtue; by the due Execution of such wholesome Laws, as are in being against Irreligion, and Immorality, without Fear, or Favour, or any partial Connivance at wicked, and unlawful Practices, either in themselves, or others.

AND *lastly*, it is the Duty, (plain Duty shall I say, or rather the great Prerogative) of the Supreme, to be the Guardian of Religion, and not only to defend it with the secular Arm, and to secure to it its peculiar Immunities; but also to encourage, and promote it, all that is possible, to make all prudent Provisions to that Purpose, by the legislative Authority, to add fresh Vigour, and Influence to it by the Virtue of a living Example, as well as the Force of dead

dead Laws. In a Word, to make it the SERM.  
chief Object of his Care, and allow it XIV.  
the first Place in his Favour. 

AND thus, if we keep every one to his own Rank, and Order, we may all from the lowest to the highest, approve ourselves acceptable to God; and contribute in some good Measure to the Advancement of his Glory.

BUT if we suffer our Zeal, to transgress the Bounds of our proper Station, and Vocation; the Gate is then opened wide to all Manner of Disorder, and Confusion, and we know not what Extravagancies we may be hurried into.

THUS for Instance, if Men will needs set themselves up for Teachers, and run away, and preach before they are sent; what can the Product in all Likelihood be, but a plentiful Crop of wild Opinions, and monstrous Errors? Witness the great Variety of discordant Sects among ourselves, and in Particular, the Absurdities, and Blasphemies, of which the more deluded People called *Quakers*, are so notoriously guilty.

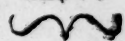
SERM.

XIV.

THUS again, if Men will needs advance themselves to the Government of the Church, before they have attain'd to the due Government of themselves; the least Check to their immodest Ambition, makes them presently start aside, and where shall you find them next, but at the Head of some new Schism, or Heresy? And such Disappointments as these gave Birth, the *Historians* tell us, to the Whimsies, and Revelations of *Montanus*, and the prodigious Conceit of *Valentinus*, and the Heterodoxies of *Arius*, and *Aërius*, and indeed to most of the antient Heresies.

ONCE more, if People will needs take upon them to be Reformers in Religion, without competent Knowledge, or Authority, and in their Zeal resolve to pull down tumultuously, though they can't tell how to take one regular Step towards building up again; I say, what can the Issue of this be, but Distraction, and Anarchy, and a Medley of Religion, as confused, as were the Languages of *Babel*; witness the blessed Attempt that was once made towards a purer Reformation among us; the sad Effects

Effects of which are still visible, not only in the Multiplicity of Opinions in Religion, but also in the irreligious, and licentious Principles, which are but too much in Vogue, and which first found their Entrance at the back Door of *Enthusiasm*.

SERM.  
XIV.  


FROM all which Instances, and many more that might be produced, it appears, how necessary it is, that Zeal should ever be confined, within its proper Limits. But to hasten forwards,

*Sixthly*, OUR Zeal ought always to be temper'd, with a due Mixture of Moderation: For 'tis a gross Mistake, to imagine that Zeal, and Moderation are Opposites, and Strangers to each other; whereas indeed they are most inseparable Friends, and Allies; insomuch, that that Zeal, (or whatever it is, that passes under that Title) is never commendable, which is not allay'd with something of Moderation; or whatever it is, that puts on the specious Name, is always culpable, that is not always enliven'd, and invigorated with Zeal.

FOR if we consider it, what is Zeal? It  
is



SERM. is not a sudden *Impetus*, or a violent Heat,  
 XIV. or the mere Effect of Rage, and Frenzy;  
 but 'tis a rational, as well as affectionate  
 Concern for God's Honour, and Service,  
 deliberately taken up, upon solid, and fo-  
 ber Grounds, and prudently carried on by  
 proper Methods, and still expressed in de-  
 cent, and fitting Manner.

AND on the other Hand, what is Mo-  
 deration? it is not a lukewarm Indiffe-  
 rence in Matters of Religion; it is not a  
 Looseness, or Latitude of Opinion; it is  
 not a sneaking Complaisance to Error, nor  
 a wavering Compliance, first with one Par-  
 ty, and then with another; but 'tis an E-  
 venness of Temper, resulting from a well  
 poised Judgment, and well regulated Af-  
 fections, and constantly adhering to the  
 Cause of Truth, and Goodness, but never  
 foregoing that Candour, and Equity, that  
 Meekness and Humanity, which are due,  
 even to those that are otherwise minded.

So that these two are not only confi-  
 stent, but necessary to each other.

FOR take away your Moderation, and  
 Zeal is the most irregular, furious, and  
 ungo-

ungovernable Thing in the whole World; SERM. XIV.  
and take away your Zeal, and then Moderation degenerates into Remissness, and Supineness, which becalms the Soul, and leaves it quite destitute of Resolution, Constancy, and Vigour.

'Tis fit therefore, that both should act in Conjunction, that neither may miss of its desired Effect, nor want its due Praise.

LET Zeal then be (as it ought to be) very ardent, and vehement in the Love of God, very active, and industrious in his Service, very bold, and resolute in Defence of his Truth, and in Vindication of his Laws; and full of a just Detestation of those vicious Opinions, and Practices, which reflect Dishonour upon his holy Name, and betray Mens Souls into endless Perdition; and hitherto there is no Danger of being immoderate.

BUT here 'twill be proper for Moderation to interpose, and to determine the Indignation, that good Men are apt to conceive on such Occasions, against the Errors, and Vices of their Adversaries, and not their Persons; and to keep their Zeal  
from

SERM. from all violent Transports of Passion,  
 XIV. from all sinister Interpretations, uncharitable Censures, unjust, or odious Charges, unnecessary Aggravations, or Provocations; from all Fierceness of Contention, from all Bitterness of Language: In a Word, from all Manner of uncourteous Treatment, or rigorous Usage, even of those, through whose Weakness, or Wilfulness such Offences do come, as manifestly turn both to the Detriment, and Disparagement of true Religion.

THIS is the virtuous Mean, in which Zeal, and Moderation meet in one: This is the happy Temperament of both, which enables those who are furnished with it, to maintain the Cause of Religion, sedately and resolutely at once; *i. e.* in such a Manner, as best becomes our holy Religion, and the Wisdom, and Meekness of its Author.

AND I here should be unjust, both to the Zeal, and Moderation of our most religious Queen; if I should not gratefully remember, what she has so lately delivered from the Throne, as a noble Proof of both, *viz.* That she shall be very careful to preserve,

serve, and maintain the Act of Toleration, S E R M.  
and to set all her Subject's Minds at quiet, XIV.  
(such is her princely Clemency, and Moderation to all) but that her own Principles must always keep her entirely firm, to the Interests, and Religion of the *Church of England*; and encline her to encourage those that have the truest Zeal, (and that's the truest Zeal that copies closest, after so excellent an Example) to support it.

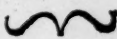
*Seventhly*, To make our Zeal the more effectual, and the more eminently serviceable to our common Edification, we ought to accommodate it, not only to the Needs of our own Souls, but to the Exigences of God's Church; and the Circumstances of Things in the Time and Place, that Providence shall allot to us, for our sojourning here on Earth.

AND here we ought to begin at the right End, *i. e.* with ordering our own Conversation aright, or rectifying what is amiss in our own Conduct; that so our Instructions, Admonitions, or Reproofs may be so much the more efficacious upon others that want them. For these *Christian* Offices, these charitable Expressions  
of



SERM. of Zeal, are always best accepted, and  
XIV. most regarded, when they are warranted  
by a suitable Example; when Men make  
it their first Care to give their *Christian*  
Brethren this unquestionable Evidence, that  
they themselves are thoroughly confirmed in  
the Belief, and Practice of those Things,  
which they press so zealously upon o-  
thers.

THIS Foundation once laid, they who  
are inspired with a godly Zeal will pro-  
ceed regularly in the rest of their Work;  
and such their Zeal will not only fit grace-  
fully upon them, but become as Armour  
of Proof against all the fiery Darts of the  
Devil. They will then be bold in the  
Cause of God, and contend earnestly for  
the Faith, whenever it is openly impugned,  
or secretly undermined. They will keep  
constantly to the good old Paths, altho'  
they should spy very great Numbers on  
every Hand, either wandering, or desert-  
ing; nay, although they should see them-  
selves exposed to Discouragements, and  
Difficulties every Step they take, through  
the unhappy Mistakes of the Ignorant, or the  
wilful Misconstructions of the Malicious;  
through

through the Carelessness, and Neglect of SERM.  
the Indifferent, or the Scorn, and Con- XIV.  
tempt of the Profane. 

IN a Word, they will set themselves resolutely to oppose the fashionable Vices, and growing Corruptions of the Age, they will not fail to appear *as burning, and shining Lights in the midst of a crooked, and perverse Generation*: Lights that will make Men see (what they hate) *that their Deeds are evil*; Lights that will make the Cheeks of Sinners glow with Shame, if they have any Remains of Grace, or even common Modesty; such Lights at least as may warn the careless, and the heedless ones from running upon those Rocks of Offence, that lie full in their Way, and endanger the Shipwreck both of sound Faith, and a good Conscience.

AND they who are truly zealous for their God, will not be discouraged in these their pious Endeavours, much less diverted from the steady Course of Virtue, by the strong Torrent of prevailing Wickedness; for they still will animate themselves with the Hope of bringing some Degree of Honour to God, and doing some little Ser-

SER M. vice to the Flock of *Christ*, if they can  
 XIV. but save some few Souls from Death, and  
 ~~~~~ cover some Part of a great Multitude of  
 Sins.

To which good End may we all in our
 several Capacities zealously contribute, and
 may God accept our Zeal, direct, and pro-
 sper it for the Advancement of his own
 Honour, and the Edification, and Salva-
 tion of those Souls, for whom *Christ* died.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son,
 and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is
 due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty, and
 Dominion, now, henceforth, and for ever-
 more. Amen.*



The End of the Second Volume.

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